

THE PASSION FOR OUTREACH TO THE UN-CHURCHED

By

EDWARD AYISI NYARKO

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ABSTRACT

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By

Edward Ayisi Nyarko

The journey to my Doctor of Ministry demonstration project (DP) began in a predominantly African church in the Bronx, located in the center of a community that was not represented in its congregation. The community was majority of Irish and Irish-American decent, but not a single one of them attended this African church. The songs and liturgy were modeled in the charismatic church format, that is, Holy Ghost filled, tongue speaking worship with prophecies and laying of hands on the sick for healing. Yet, there was lack of communication between the administration and the congregation and it created a big vacuum. I realized that all the negative disguises were definitely going to be a hindrance to my family's Christian growth and a deterrent to my demonstration project. On April 30, 2006, I was invited to speak at the Church of God of East Flatbush and I felt the sincere love that was accorded me with a serene peace in my heart. My family and I prayed, and waited on the Lord for a sign or a confirmation for a new church to join. The first breakthrough occurred on June 4, 2006, while praying with my family and a prayer partner (also a pastor) of mine. The Lord spoke in a clear calm voice, "The hour has come and now is." Right then it was confirmed to me what the Lord had been saying that He was preparing a way for me to leave the African church and be planted elsewhere.

I assumed the call to service in the Church of God of East Flatbush on July 4, 2006 and have been there ever since.

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Dedicated to
My dear wife Esther, and
My children Jeanette and Joshua Nyarko.

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First, I wish to give praise and glory to the God of my life and the creator of the universe for orchestrating every move in this journey to make all things consist in His will. Thanks be to God for the new environment in the Church of God of East Flatbush, and the love that He has forged between my family and the members of the church.

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PRAISE BE TO GOD

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INTRODUCTION

WHY LIGHTHOUSE EVANGELISM?

You are the light of the world – like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. (Matt. 5:14-15)¹

We are saved by the grace of God and as such, the Word of God commands us to let our light of salvation shine and be seen by all people. This light is not to shine only to families or the Christian world but to all humankind. The Bible quotation affirms the vision of the Church of God of East Flatbush (COGOEF) that states the church's goal as, "Making disciples to impact the world."

The efforts of Church of God of East Flatbush to attract and evangelize un-churched people have been built on personal relationships, often limited to family members and relatives. Still Church of God of East Flatbush is striving to be multi-cultural in its community and New York City at large, though it is predominately a Jamaican church located in East Flatbush. Bishop RC Hugh Nelson, and his wife, place, their lamp on a stand for our guests to see and feel welcomed into the church every Sunday after service, and this has impacted almost all the church members. People are well received and this hospitality is always the first comment visitors give whether they leave or return to the church. This is the primary reason people are attracted to the Church of God of East Flatbush but this falls short of the vision for the church, which is to win people from all ethnicities represented in New York City as stated by the vision

¹ All biblical quotations, unless otherwise noted, are from New Living Translation, 2nd ed., *Abundant Life Bible* (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2004).

for the church. A broad evangelism is needed to reach out to the different ethnicities in New York City.

Based on recent interviews with new converts to the Church of God of East Flatbush, it has been proven that these people came to church as a result of personal invitations by relatives and friends. The new converts also commented on how they felt welcomed and cared for whenever they stepped into the church. The church has relied heavily on its members, and the congregation, to reach out to relatives and families who are un-churched to be won into it.²

The Lighthouse demonstration project³ was introduced as a way to broaden the evangelism of the church. Its introduction to the Church of God of East Flatbush helped to complement the old form of evangelism and eliminated the “in your face” tracts and brochure distributions to win souls. In the long run, the purpose of the project was to identify an appropriate and practical approach to evangelical outreach for the Church of God of East Flatbush. The overall goal of the Lighthouse Evangelism was to reach the un-churched within the East Flatbush community first, and then those in other parts of New York City which comprises of people from all nations of the world.

Testing the efficacy the Lighthouse Evangelism model was the goal of this project. Based on the success or failure of this project, the Church of God of East Flatbush was to decide either to adopt the Lighthouse Evangelism project as the church’s

² Church of God of East Flatbush, Membership and Baptismal Records 2,000 – 2,007

³ The use of Lighthouses will vary in this writing and each will have a significant meaning: 1) Lighthouse Evangelism is the format for the evangelism, 2) The Lighthouse Focus Group represents 25 selected COGOEF members including the Site Team that participated in the evangelism for the demonstration project, 3) Lighthouse Model is the type of evangelism used in the process, 4) Lighthouse Movement is the act that conceived the model of evangelism.

evangelism model or search for an alternative. The Church of God of East Flatbush needed a model that could be used to measure the results of evangelism in the church.

The Lighthouse Movement was originally conceived by a unified coalition of churches, denominations and para-church ministries to mobilize churches to pray for, care for, and lovingly share Christ, with every person in America. In other words, the Lighthouse Model is built on three pillars of activity: prayer, care and share.⁴ While the primary focus was the target population in the church community, individual members of the team were encouraged to establish a lighthouse in their own neighborhoods, businesses, schools, athletic teams and other relational networks.

The participants of the project known as the Lighthouse Focus Group (see footnote on page 2) comprised 25 people, 16 women and 9 men. The group had 11 people who had administrative positions in schools and companies throughout New York City. Among them, was a professor in a community college, a principle of a high school and assistant director for a shelter for women. There were also blue-collar workers in all fields, from construction to hospital employees. Retired men and women also participated in the project and the average age was about forty-six years. In addition, we had 2 college students and 1 high school senior. These volunteers were immediately asked to develop a prayer list for the people each person was going to pray for and to begin praying for those in the neighborhood of the church who were unemployed and or economically deprived to get jobs, and to pray for those who were sick to be healthy.

The Lighthouse Focus Group took prayer walks in their chosen areas (See Chapter 7 for detailed explanation) of Lighthouses and in the neighborhood surrounding

⁴ Mission America, "The Lighthouse Movement" <http://www.missionamerica.org> (accessed April 27, 2008). Adopted by The Pastoral Board COGOEF (October 2007).

the church. During these walks, they prayed for God to open doors to enable them to share Christ to the un-churched. The participants were instructed to begin building bridges with the people in the community by praying for God to bless them. As the opportunity arose, the Lighthouse Focus Group member established a relationship with the un-churched; they were also invited to social activities in the church. George Barna⁵ states in his book, *Evangelism That Works*, “[o]utreach efforts that take advantage of the credibility, accessibility and trust of an existing friendship have a better chance of succeeding than does cold call evangelism.”⁶ This aspect of the program required the Lighthouse Focus Group to look for natural opportunities to share the story of Jesus to the target population.

In order to support the program a mentoring component was introduced as an integral part of the project. The mentoring aspect of the study used the bridged relationship that is, connecting an experienced Christian in the house of God with a new convert, like a bridge connecting two lands. This helped to keep new converts in the ministry.

The Lighthouse Model of evangelism is unique and non-confrontational because you do not contact people from the onset, but you pray for their welfare until the Spirit of God leads them to you. At this point you are able to approach the people to help them with their needs by putting your love for others into action. You listen and watch for the

⁵ George Barna is president of *Barna Research Group, Ltd.*, a marketing research firm located in Ventura, California. The Barna Group conducts opinion polls, which are generally interpreted from an evangelical perspective, and often cited within evangelical circles. He has conducted research for hundreds of churches and parachurch ministries as well as Fortune 500 companies and non-profit organizations. A best-selling author and frequent speaker at conferences around the world, Barna has taught at universities and seminaries and has served as a pastor at a large, multi-ethnic church.

⁶ George Barna, *Evangelism that Works: How to Reach Changing Generations with the Unchanging Gospel* (Ventura, California: Regal Books, 1995), 28.

needs of others and you step in to help. Doing the act of kindness it opens dialogues with relatively unknown individuals; relationships are birthed with neighbors, classmates and colleagues at work. Upon building the relationships in the community, at work, or at school, some focus group members had the opportunity to share the Word of God with people and lead them to the Lord.

Leslie Henry, a Lighthouse Focus Group member recounts this experience:

I am a very shy person who does my evangelism with people familiar to me, but when I joined the Lighthouse Focus Group, the project helped me to reach out beyond my boundaries to pray for people wherever I go. I also pray now with a passion to see God's people established in many parts of New York City as servants for God.⁷

The disadvantage of using the Lighthouse Evangelism model is that, it does not guarantee when you will have a break through. It could be weeks, months and maybe years before the un-churched will decide to commit to the Lord. The project did not always meet with smooth outcomes; there were times that those who had been ministered to promised to attend free social events by the church and did not show up.

To conclude this project we explored ideas that could unify the church and the community either through worship or recreational events. The intent of the study was also to identify an appropriate and practical approach to evangelical outreach for the Church of God of East Flatbush. The overall goal of the study was to reach the un-churched within the community and those who have become inactive after membership through recruiting and integration leading to retention.

⁷ Leslie Henry, Report presented to COGOEF Lighthouse Evangelism group, July 11, 2007.

Challenge Statement

Church of God of East Flatbush is located in a diverse multiethnic, multicultural neighborhood at 409-15 East 95th Street, Brooklyn. It is comprised of dedicated members who have a strong desire for evangelical outreach, but have some deficiency in their evangelical strategies. The passion for outreach to the un-churched necessitates a structured evangelical program designed not only to bring in new members, but also to develop long-term discipleship. Subsequently, my challenge is to forge an inclusive Discipleship Program in the church that will help in outreach and integrating new members.

CHAPTER 1

THE SETTING

Identity of the Setting

The Church of God of East Flatbush is located at 409-19 East 95th Street between Kings Highway and Wilhmer Street in Brooklyn. The Church was conceived in the late 1960s when some immigrants from the island of Jamaica arrived in New York City and could not locate the “New Testament Church of God,” as they knew it in their native land. The Church served as a haven for Jamaican immigrants by providing a support system for the members while maintaining their cultural identity and the Church of God affiliation. The Church established a rich heritage and successful ministries but its inability to engage and integrate other cultures has resulted in a plateau in growth and ministry effectiveness.

Church of God of East Flatbush is governed by a hierarchical leadership headed by the Senior Pastor (who is also a Bishop over seven other churches), four Associate Pastors, twelve Deacons, six Ministers, and over thirty Chaplains, six Trustee board members and serves over one hundred Ministry team leaders. The Church of God of East Flatbush has a membership of about 1,500 of which about 70% are women and about 30% men, and a thriving children and youth population. This is a growing church with almost a full capacity of congregants in its three weekly Sunday services. The Church serves over twenty-five hundred people on weekly basis through its worship services, food programs, educational facilities, community outreach and training programs. The Church is located in an area characterized by high mobility, mostly of immigrants and

working class families. The congregation is composed of middle to lower income families with an increasing number of university graduates with earning potential.

The community of East Flatbush falls among the underprivileged and underserved communities in Brooklyn. There is a communal disparity when it comes to receiving government help as explained in the community district profile report.⁸ This is evident when District 17 (COGOEF district, African American) is compared to District 6 (mainly Caucasians). The latter has less crime and a lower mortality rate and still receives more public assistance than the former. In addition, there is a lower median income and a larger portion of the population living below the poverty level, thus more people are recipients of public assistance in District 17.

Development is generally high-density housing and high population without increased infrastructure. The surrounding communities are also characterized by high poverty, low education and high unemployment. In the year 2003, 1,622 incidents of child abuse and neglect were reported in the area. In the same year almost 20 out of every 1,000 children were sent to foster care. It was also estimated that over 3,200 seriously emotionally disturbed youth needed mental health services. Research on immigration of children with their parents has shown negative mental health outcomes and estranged family relations.⁹ In terms of safety, East Flatbush and neighboring communities are among the city's lowest ranked.¹⁰ The latest available data shows more than 40 violent felonies were reported per 1,000 in the district compared to 27.8 citywide,

⁸ New York City Department of City Planning, *Brooklyn Community District Profile Reports*; December 2004.

⁹ Cynthia Osborne and Sara McLanahan, "Partnership Instability and Child Well-Being," *Journal of Marriage and Family* 69 (November 2007): 1069.

¹⁰ Citizen's Committee for Children of New York, "Keeping Track of New York City's Children," 2005, <http://www.cccnewyork.org> (accessed April 27, 2008).

and the total number of arrests per 1,000 residents was almost double the citywide average. A total of 321 juvenile felony arrests and 137 juvenile misdemeanor arrests were made per thousand in the district. Based on the above statistics we see a neighborhood that is hurting and the Lighthouse Evangelism provides a solace to such families. They may shun the help because of anger and disappointments but if we unflinchingly persevere, some souls may be won to the Kingdom of God.

The Church of God of East Flatbush congregation has remained stable while the community has undergone racial and cultural changes, because it is a congregation of relatives and families bonded together. The vision of the church, “Making Disciples to Impact the World” is therefore an effort to win people from diverse cultural backgrounds. There are a high percentage of un-churched individuals and people with many needs in the communities surrounding the Church of God. The un-churched would include individuals who are not presently affiliated with or attending any formal or informal religious organization. The Lighthouse demonstration project was therefore accepted as a strong evangelical strategy to reach the un-churched within the community and those who have become inactive after membership through recruiting and integration leading to retention.

The Context

The Church of God of East Flatbush is located in a primarily residential community of East Flatbush, a neighborhood in the borough of Brooklyn in New York City. For many years the area was predominantly African American, but it has seen many Haitian and English-speaking West Indian immigrant groups coming to the area.

While there are some affluent citizens in the area, East Flatbush is mostly populated by working class Brooklynites.

East Flatbush is the home of the General George W. Wingate High School. It is also home to two major hospitals, Brookdale University Hospital Medical Center, Kings County Hospital and SUNY Downstate Medical Center. Although all of the above exist like any other neighborhood, this neighborhood is challenged economically and medically. The people are underserved because they are poor, unemployed and have no medical insurance to ensure the benefits of good hospital care.

The community is experiencing neglect and abandonment, which causes the middle class to move away. For example, about two thirds of the middle class of the congregation of the Church of God of East Flatbush have relocated to Long Island and the borough of Queens. Therefore when they come back into the East Flatbush community and try to associate with the people in the neighborhood, the residents shun them. Why? Because the people in the community see these former neighbors as established, whereas they are still in the slums. On the other hand, the young ones are more open because they see them as people who have made it and would like to learn the secret to their success. This attitude challenged the Lighthouse Evangelism because at the inception of the walk through most of the people refused any form of interaction with the Lighthouse Focus Group until an opportunity to assist someone opened a doorway to build some trust.

Brooklyn has been the city's largest borough since the mid-1920s.¹¹ According to 2006 U.S. Census Bureau estimates, there are 2,471,042 people (up from 2.3 million in 1990), 872,186 households, and 583,922 families residing in Brooklyn. Were it still a separate city and not a borough, Brooklyn would be the fourth largest city in the United States after New York City, Los Angeles and Chicago. Brooklyn has long been a magnet for immigrants because of its proximity to the ports. It is close to John F. Kennedy airport and the piers for arriving ships. Presently it has substantial populations from many countries, including China, Jamaica, Pakistan and Russia. Apart from those who move to nearby boroughs and counties, an overwhelming majority of those who live in Brooklyn, move to the Broward, Dade, Palm Beach, and Orange Counties of Florida. Migration is one of the primary reasons for the church losing new members, especially the elderly population. There is a vast migration data that indicates that young people from many other nationalities have been arriving in the community. Therefore, the population in the community continues to grow as new people have moved in, replacing the migrating population which calls for evangelism and retention.

The relocations and the new arrivals into Brooklyn and the particular needs of East Flatbush underscore the necessity to evangelize in the East Flatbush community.

Responding to the Challenges

While brooding over our plan for the Lighthouse project, the site team members met at restaurants, individual member's homes and in various locations until one of the

¹¹ U.S. Census Bureau, Last Revised: June 11, 2007, www.census.gov (accessed April 27, 2008).

members suggested of a vacant office in the main church premises and we agreed to use the office at the beginning of our next meeting. Here, we pondered and strategized our plans for the implementation of the Lighthouse demonstration project. Initially we worked on the forms (see Appendix A) that we were going to use to train and to select volunteers for the focus group needed for the Lighthouse Evangelism. The Lighthouse site team consisted of three dedicated women and two men.

These meetings were very necessary because they helped to develop a formal evangelism model called the Lighthouse to the entire congregation of the church in order to solicit individuals for the project. A power point presentation of what the Lighthouse is about had been done and a DVD recording of the process was ordered, but we had to design a form for the survey of the people to review their backgrounds for the selection of the Lighthouse Focus Group. In addition a weekly report form was to be designed to suit (see Appendix AA) both the youth and elderly, because both would be useful for the project. The elderly were particularly useful because some of them were retired and we could call on them when we needed someone. The youth were needed to participate in the program, because they are quick and sharp in doing things such as obtaining information from the computer and imputing data for the group. Determining how to formulate and present the information on the weekly report form was also very essential. We did not want it to be a deterrent to any member because they could not write the weekly reports. In other words, the message on the form was to be simple enough for everyone to understand and fill it out. The selection of the Lighthouse Focus Group was based on first come first served basis.

The introduction for the Lighthouse training was announced on a Wednesday night, February 14, 2007, at the beginning of the midweek service. Over 75 people were in attendance. At the initial introduction, the speaker mentioned a new model of evangelism was being introduced which was different from the every day evangelism of going out to distribute tracts and share the word. The congregation was briefed by Arnold Kirlaw, a member of the site team, in preparation for the following week when the Lighthouse training and presentation would begin. The site team explained to the congregation that the way the church was doing evangelism did not have a way to measure the results. On the other hand, the Lighthouse Model has a format to measure what is done and how effective it is.

The actual training (See Chapter 7) began on the following Wednesday, February 21, 2007 and continued for additional two Wednesdays, for selection and training.

Goals

Discussions were held during our weekly site team meetings to introduce all the components of the Lighthouse Evangelism to the entire congregation and to select candidates based on availability and dependability for the 3-4 month project. The Lighthouse version of evangelism was to do prayer walks in the church community and individually selected areas. The Lighthouse Focus Group was to care for the needs of the people that we were trying to win, and after building a relationship with the un-churched, share the Word of God with as many people as possible.

The site team decided on the following goals for the demonstration project:

- I.** To create awareness among the Evangelism Team of the Church of God of East Flatbush regarding the harvest of the un-churched.
- II.** To increase the knowledge of the Light House Strategy to ensure full implementation in order to reach the un-churched in the community.
- III.** To develop a team mentoring strategy to integrate the un-churched into the church of God of East Flatbush.

The site team, in conjunction with the church board, agreed to adopt the strategies learned from the Lighthouse Model of evangelism permanently into the Church of God of East Flatbush, if we achieved a positive result. The decision was not only about success in soul winning but to teach the church how to evangelize as the act of loving, caring and building a relationship with people first, before sharing God with those they evangelize. Prior to the Lighthouse Evangelism, the church had a laissez faire relationship with its community, just like most churches have had in the past. There was no communication between the church and the community in which it is situated. We hoped to correct the errors of the past and to encourage our community to form alliances with the people and build bridges that would lead us to the needs of the area. The Lighthouse Model therefore opened a channel for involvement in the community and by the power of God drew people to the Lighthouse Focus Group and vice versa.

CHAPTER 2

MODELS OF EVANGELISM

Practiced Models of Evangelism

Most Christians believe (incorrectly) that evangelism is meant to happen primarily during the Sunday morning worship. Amazingly, just one-third of all adults contend that they personally have any responsibility or obligation to share their religious views with other people.¹²

The normal way of evangelism is equated with witnessing or preaching the Word of God to people in the street and other places where people gather. From this perspective, evangelism is limited to a standard, which is a place, time, ministry or gender that will not be attractive enough to reach all people and draw them from all cultures to the Lord. On the other hand, when the Spirit of God is in motion or God in action then, His creation is used to liberate the un-freed people from bondage by manifesting purpose, meaning, love and life in Christ. The word *evangelist* comes from the “Koine” Greek word εὐαγγέλιον (transcribed as "euangelion") via Latin "Evangelium", as used in the canonical titles of the four Gospels, authored by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The Greek word εὐαγγέλιον originally meant a reward for good news given to the messenger (εὖ = "good", ἀγγέλλω = "I bring a message"; the word is of the same root) and later "good news". The latter term gives rise to the word "Gospel".

Our God has charged us with an enormous responsibility, which is also a privilege, to reach out to the people of the world. I have other sheep, too, that are not in this sheepfold. I must bring them also. They will listen to my voice, and there will be one flock with one shepherd. (John 10:16) Jesus also places great priority on finding lost sheep, and there is great rejoicing in heaven when just one is found (Luke 15:3-7). Dr.

¹² George Barna, *Evangelism that Works*, 23.

Cornell Haan explains, "Most Christians have a genuine concern for the lost and a sincere desire to see people come to a saving knowledge of the Lord. The problem isn't the lack of willingness; it's the lack of knowing where to go and how to get started."¹³

Churches serious about reaching people for Jesus must have a multitude of alternatives or entry points accessible to non-believers. For example, having a food pantry could attract all kinds of people and could eventually be an avenue for evangelism. There also must be individuals in churches that address spiritual needs from distinctive perspectives, that is, to have people trained to confront spiritual concerns of the people we evangelize. Lighthouse Evangelism offers an effective model based on the results of this demonstration project (See Chapter 7) and when compared to some other models described in George Barna's book, *Evangelism That Works*. George Barna describes five types of modern day evangelism:

The **Lifestyle or Friendship Evangelism** is an approach that it is based on developing significant, credible relationships with nonbelievers. In a way it works like the Lighthouse caring or building a relationship.

The foundation of this approach is that you build an authentic, non-manipulative relationship with a nonbeliever, reflect a lifestyle that is overtly but not offensively different from the norm, raise curiosity of the nonbeliever through idiosyncratic behavior and have the opportunity at the request of the nonbeliever to describe the reasons and motivations of underlying your unique way of life.¹⁴

You must then proclaim the gospel verbally. No matter how intriguing your disparate lifestyle might be, the underlying reasons will not become clear to the nonbeliever, and

¹³ Cornell Haan, *The Lighthouse Devotional* (Sisters, Oregon: Multnomah Publishers, 2000), 5. He is the National Facilitator of Ministry Networks for Mission America and The Lighthouse Movement. This is a coalition of churches, denominations, parachurch ministries and ministry networks working together to mobilize the church to pray for, care for, and share Christ with every American.

¹⁴ Ibid., 78.

he or she will not have a real chance to embrace Christ as a result of your efforts, unless your faith in Christ is explained. In this type of evangelism the approach is that the lifestyle or a leading a good life and being friendly will open up a door for sharing the Christian faith and God will do the rest. Therefore it becomes an excuse for some Christians not to study the Word.

The second type is the **Family Evangelism**, in which one family member shares the gospel with another family member, a common practice in Church of God of East Flatbush. This type is used by majority of adult Christians who prefer to evangelize to family members because they are easily accessible. The believer usually takes the initiative in these circumstances and seeks to persuade the non-believing family member of the importance of a decision for Christ. The deeper emotional bonds involved in family sharing and because the believer tends to initiate the conversation, family evangelism sometimes results in heated discussions, hurt feelings and broken relationships more often than in lifestyle changes. This type of evangelism may end up like the Friendship Evangelism with the un-churched not giving in to Christ. In other words it does not win many souls.

The third type, **Confrontational Evangelism**, is the classic, traditional form of evangelism in which Christians meet a person they probably do not know and share the Good News. Confrontational evangelism occurs among people known to the one evangelizing, at work with associates or neighbors, with whom the Christian does not have a particularly strong or long relationship. It leads to arguments and sometimes a fight ensues before a compromise is reached. It is also known as the street-corner evangelism, the stereotypical purveyors of this method are two people discussing Christ

or the Bible. Numerically, however, according to Barna street evangelism is among the least common forms of evangelism outreach.

The fourth type is what George Barna calls the **Cell-group Evangelism**. It was one of the most frequently talked about strategies in the 1970s and still is in use today.

Approximately 3 percent of all adults are involved in any kind of cell group in which evangelism is one of the foci of the meeting. Cell groups are essentially small groups of people who meet regularly for some form of Christian activity. Most small groups revolve around teaching, prayer and building interpersonal relationships.¹⁵

In this type of evangelism, groups meet one weeknight each week or every other week for about 90 minutes. The participants are usually Christians who are active in a local church from which the group originates and it helps evangelism as members are invited to churches.

Finally, **Power Evangelism** is considered by George Barna to be the most controversial of the common personal evangelism techniques. This approach is commonly used outside the United States. This type of evangelism is based on the contention that when Jesus and the disciples ministered, they sought converts through two acts. First, they proclaimed the gospel verbally, and second, they demonstrated the power of God through acts of love or service (e.g., healing). Those who advocate power evangelism suggest that this is a combination of the rational with the trans-rational. Instead of relying solely upon intellectual assent to spiritual truths and principles, this strategy offers the nonbeliever a physical demonstration of the power of the gospel.

As noted above, most of the new Christians interviewed in the Church of God of East Flatbush, came as a result of personal invitations by relatives and friends. In other words, they came by **Family Evangelism**, the process by which one family member

¹⁵ Ibid., 80.

shares the gospel with another family member and leads the person to God. The new converts also commented on how they felt welcomed and cared for whenever they stepped into the church. The church has therefore relied heavily on its members, and the congregation, to reach out for others into the kingdom.

As a member of the Church of God of East Flatbush myself, the gracious hospitality accorded to their guests is obvious and visible. The welcoming atmosphere in the church is very pleasing; and strong worship services and great sermons by the Senior Pastor Bishop R.C. Hugh Nelson are alluring. The atmosphere is non-threatening to visitors. People are not pressured to join when they come for visits. The ushers undergo eight months of training before being given an ushering position. This tends to shape them into professionals and they do a great job of welcoming people. Most of our visitors say, the church has a very friendly atmosphere and they feel right at home when they arrive. Those who make spiritual commitments to join the church are placed under mentors and experienced group leaders, who develop a personal relationship with them, and then they are placed in additional training classes to learn the doctrines and by-laws of the church. From that they are plugged into leadership training groups of their calling and personal contact ensues between the mentors and mentees to build a relationship which might lead to recruiting other souls.

A visit to Bethel Gospel Tabernacle

Brooklyn and Queens are two of the five boroughs of New York City that I sometimes call the “Twin Boroughs” because they are the only two boroughs joined together that you do not have to cross a bridge or any water to get from one to the other. These two boroughs have similar socio-economic and ethnic characteristics, which

contribute to the prevalence of religious organizations throughout the boroughs. Despite the similarity of offerings, these facilities all have unique cultures and philosophies, which attract different types of people. The environment, culture and needs of each locality determine the institution's population and focus. Based on these trends, I decided to visit one church in each borough, Queens and Brooklyn, to learn about some of the positive strategies being utilized for evangelism in those churches.

I chose to visit Bethel Gospel Tabernacle, in particular because of their exposure to the Lighthouse Movement. My site team placed a call to the headquarters of the Lighthouse Movement in Grand Rapids, Missouri to enquire if there were any churches in the tri-state area that had adopted the Lighthouse Model of evangelism. The only one was Bethel Gospel Tabernacle, which had participated in some activities with the Lighthouse Movement three years earlier.

Dean Sadie Alvarez is in charge of Bethel Bible Institute (BBI), a subsidiary of Bethel Gospel Tabernacle. I visited the BBI on the evening of June 19, 2007. I was ushered into the office of the dean with a pleasant welcoming greeting. We delved into the purpose of my visit immediately, which was to find out what type of evangelism they had in the church. I discovered there was no formalized model of evangelism being used in the church. On the other hand, I was introduced to the teachings provided in the Bethel Bible Institute and the books used for evangelism.

BBI is the starting point for Bethel Gospel Tabernacle evangelism. It is the area where knowledge is shared with those involved in evangelism. Basically what I gathered in our conversation was that those interested in evangelism were taught theoretically and then sent out to prisons, shelters and kitchen pantries for hands-on practice.

The following books served as tools for evangelism and discipleship training in the BBI:

1. *God's Generals*, by Roberts Liardon (EC110, Lives of Famous Evangelists).
2. *E. M. Bounds on Prayer*, by Jim Cymbala (EC108, The Ministry of Prayer).
3. *Master Plan of Evangelism and Soul winner*, by James Montgomery Boyce (EC103, Evangelism).
4. *The Lost Art of Discipleship*, by Leroy Eims (EC104, Discipleship).
5. *The disciple making church*, by Hull (EC104, Discipleship).
6. *The disciple making Pastor*, by Hull (EC104, Discipleship).
7. *Balancing the Christian Life*, by Charles Ryrie (EC103, Evangelism).

According to Dean Sadie Alvarez, Bethel Gospel Tabernacle was born through prayer and has continued in prayer to this day. It is the sincere prayer of the pastors that Bethel will continue to be as the name implies, Beth-el – House of God, a house of prayer for all people. Bethel has had an illustrious past, an exciting and challenging present, and they trust a glorious future of continued service to God and man.

The Great Commission of “Go ye...” (Mark 16:15-18) is the marching order of the Bethel Gospel Tabernacle Prison Ministry. Not only were they asked by Bishop Roderick R. Caesar (the senior pastor of Bethel Gospel Tabernacle) to go into the prisons and bring the message of the Gospel to those behind bars, but they were compelled by God to do so. The people of Bethel Gospel Tabernacle give thanks to God for the privilege to serve Him.

Dean Alvarez said their foundation for prison evangelism comes from Matthew 25:34-40 where Jesus taught His disciples from the Mount of Olives an important lesson

about visiting those in prison. This is viewed as an approach to reach the prisoner to be reconciled to Christ, and beyond that, prisoners' families should be reconciled also, possibly restoring the prisoner back into society as a key contributor. "Their vision includes the development of Bethel's halfway houses that will serve as conduits between the prisons and the society."¹⁶ They have envisioned a broken prisoner coming out of Bethel's Prison Ministry whole, delivered and set free from the chains that once had him/her bound. The facilities members of Bethel Gospel Tabernacle visit Metropolitan Detention Center in Brooklyn, Rikers Island Correctional Facility in Queens and various upstate prisons (weather permitting).

By the end of my conversation with Dean Alvarez I realized that they have an excellent benevolence program, but there was not much of an evangelism strategy or model being used at Bethel Gospel Tabernacle.

A visit to The Brooklyn Tabernacle

When seeking a place for worship, individuals are drawn to organizations that have standards they admire, maintain values similar to their own, satisfy a void in their life, enable them to feel encouraged and empowered, and provide guidance for growth. Church of God of East Flatbush plans to provide services that are similar to other Brooklyn religious facilities. Our services will sometimes complement, supplement and always further enhance the availability of the needed resources of our immediate vicinity. The continued cycle of poverty, unequal funding allocation among districts and a growing population supports the need for increased resources. The Brooklyn Tabernacle shares similar ethnic characteristics and needs. In addition, the Brooklyn Tabernacle is

¹⁶ Sadie Alvarez, taped interview by author, 19 June 2007, Lighthouse Evangelism Project, Church of God of East Flatbush. Permission for use granted in all interviews.

successful in drawing large numbers for its congregational growth. It is considered a mega Church. These things prompted me to find out about their evangelism strategy.

I met with Pastor Brian Pettrey minister of evangelistic outreach at The Brooklyn Tabernacle (TBT) church on Wednesday June 20, 2007. The meeting started promptly at 1 o'clock. I was met by a member of the church staff who directed me to Pastor Pettrey. I explained the purpose for my visit and the Lighthouse Model of Evangelism to him.

According to the pastor, The Brooklyn Tabernacle church does not have a formal evangelism model that they follow. The church has done many things to reach out to the community. Beginning with the original Brooklyn Tabernacle church location, he described how the church hosted four services on a Sunday, which were still not accommodating the people. The church was always packed, so they felt reaching out to get more people would be a problem if not an outright disaster. He spoke about packing a congregation of 2,000 people in a 1,300unit sanctuary then. Consequently, the church decided to move into a larger space. At the present location in downtown Brooklyn on 17 Smith Street, they are just starting to develop a program for formal evangelism outreach. The church is testing to see which program works best, then they will move on with the right choice.

Pastor Pettrey was impressed with the Lighthouse Model of evangelism, but he seriously believes that all forms of evangelism are based on relationship. He mentioned that having passion for people is the key to evangelism and that is where his heart is. He also said,

Evangelism is always going to be effective if it's relationally based. If you read anything say, from Billy Graham, or Rick Warren who do evangelism from a proclamation perspective, all of what they will tell you is that eighty-five to ninety percent of the people that come to meetings

and get saved are people that come because of relationship. This is what The Brooklyn Tabernacle has capitalized on, to try to be relational to others.¹⁷

What they have started doing for the past year is placing praying stations on street corners. With this kind of evangelism, you do not have to do anything to try and solicit people in a cold way, for example putting a flyer in the face of people. Instead you just put the stand up and people will approach you. This is something Church of God of East Flatbush has been doing for a few years now (See Chapter 4 for detailed information on the prayer station).

Through the prayer stations, TBT collects names, telephone numbers and addresses in order to follow up with people. There are people in the church who pray constantly for evangelism and for all needs. For the past year, the evangelism team has highlighted a couple of thousand names, addresses, e-mail addresses and telephone numbers and taken up their prayer requests. A month later they call to follow up on how the individuals are doing since they met on the street. This call most times will blow people away, and again that comes back to the same relational type of evangelism. They ask people if their needs have been met or if they have another need to pray for. Pastor Pettrey reported, based on statistics sixty-five to seventy percent of the people who visit their church do not return, but they intend to invite them back for church activities and special occasions.

TBT does occasional mass mailing to the people, inviting them to basketball games or a Christmas service. A normal week at TBT could be hosting about a thousand visitors, which makes it almost impossible to reach out to everyone to measure their

¹⁷ Brian Pettrey, interview by author, 20 June 2007, Lighthouse Evangelism Project, Church of God of East Flatbush.

participation in the church. The way that the church is able to measure its success rate in evangelism is through baptism, counting the number of new people that get baptized in the church. They also have a network with people and other churches upstate that host basketball and soccer camps. Lasting for a week, these games have about four hundred participants. Camps are also set up for a couple hundred kids from 2nd grade to 8th grade, which are ministered to and taught while they have fun in an atmosphere they enjoy. At the end of these events, the names of the people are given to the church to follow up with the families of the children, either through a visit to the house or phone call. During some visits, the church will meet a need for the children and introduce what they are doing in the community and begin to build a relationship. For instance, they will talk about classes for English as a second language being offered to the community.

Sponsorships, or financial assistance, for the programs are sometimes earned by the work of the senior pastor. When he preaches abroad, rather than collecting fees, money is donated to the church programs. For example, Japan has a ninety-nine percent literacy rate and the Japanese have become concerned about the literacy rate in America and will donate money to assist that program. TBT receives no government funding after an experience of getting people to write grants and visit by a senator became a fiasco.

There is no formal evangelism model in use at Brooklyn Tabernacle. As noted above the pastor mentioned the prayer station, street outreach, and prayers for the needy. The church also participates in most street fairs in the community, getting a stand with a tent and a TV to show what they are doing in the community.

The evangelism plan being devised for Brooklyn Tabernacle will involve breaking Brooklyn down into zones based on zip codes. There is a data base of fifty

thousand people for the past 8 years who have visited the church and the church staff is in the process extracting the names of people who reside in Brooklyn to follow up either by a visit or call. By Christmas 2007, they are planning to do a logo on door hangers with a list of things that the church is doing in the neighborhood.

In conclusion, I discovered that even though the Brooklyn Tabernacle has great audience and media power, they are not flawless. The church is still looking for new ways to do evangelism and a way to keep records on what they are doing in that field. TBT is working on the record keeping of its visitors and membership, which is the same challenge Church of God of East Flatbush is facing. I left feeling very optimistic about the Lighthouse Evangelism project because it answers most of the issues on record keeping and follow-ups for souls that are won into the church through evangelism.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT IS LIGHTHOUSE EVANGELISM?

The Lighthouse Evangelism Model

The biblical understanding of the Lighthouse Evangelism to many people is as stated in the Word of God that,

You are the light of the world – like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. (Matt. 5:14-15)

Normally to ‘evangelize’ means to spread the ‘good news’ to anyone who needs it. This may not always be the case today because people have defined good news in their own terms. In the wider context of an increasingly pluralistic culture, the very notion of evangelism is associated with an attitude of intolerance. It is no more what Isaiah 52:7 message, “How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of the messenger who brings good news, the good news of peace and the news that the God of Israel reigns!” The world no longer sees, the feet of the evangelist as beautiful as described in this Bible passage, because many people both Christians and non-Christians sometimes do not welcome the good news. Yet our God has charged us with a responsibility that we have to abide by and it is also a privilege to reach out to others. Evangelizing may be viewed as a belligerent and one-sided attempt to convert others to “our” way of seeing things, which implies that those who do not believe as we do are lost, or in error. The Lighthouse Evangelism brings a new light to evangelism and that is love and care that implore peace and understanding between the Christian and the un-churched.

The Lighthouse Movement was created with a vision to have at least two million lighthouses across America. In other words, these lighthouses are to be created in all areas to shine in our homes, neighborhoods, school compounds, workplaces and to all nations. Its mission is to eventually share Jesus Christ with every man, woman, young person, and child in America and around the world. The Lighthouse Movement was launched in 1999 by the Mission America Coalition to help mobilize the church to pray for, care for and share Jesus Christ with every person in America.

Loving Our Communities to Christ (LC2C) grew out of the Lighthouse Movement and city reaching efforts of the Mission America Coalition. LC2C emphasizes not only city-by-city transformation but also encourages followers of Jesus Christ to become a light in their own community.

For LC2C to truly succeed in America, individual Christians must be praying for, caring for and sharing Jesus Christ with their neighbors, friends, family members and co-workers who do not know Him. As lighthouses, Christians throughout the nation are living out their personal faith and sharing Jesus Christ in word and deed with those around them.

A Lighthouse is a person, family or small group committed to pray for, care for and share Christ with family members, friends, classmates, coworkers and neighbors, especially those who do not know him. Praying, caring, sharing Christians impact the lives of those in their circle of influence. Prayer moves God's hand in the lives of those who do not know Jesus (James 5:16). Caring demonstrates God's love in practical ways (Romans 12:21). Sharing exposes them to the power of the gospel (Romans 1:16).¹⁸

¹⁸ "Loving Our Communities to Christ," <http://www.missionamerica.org/Bnx> June 2007 (accessed April 27, 2008).

Every believer has what it takes to be a Lighthouse. Christ, who is the Light of the world, dwells in each of us. Lighting our world is simply a matter of letting Christ shine through us. As it is the nature of a light bulb to give light, so it is the nature of a Christian to shine. Every true Christian, having access to God's throne through Jesus Christ, can pray. Every believer, having been touched by God's loving care, can care for others. Every child of God, having been touched by God's grace, can share the good news. A Lighthouse lifestyle is Christianity 101, basic to the faith we uphold.

Every Christian is commanded to pray for those around them. Scriptures states that, "I urge you, first of all, to pray for all people. Ask God to help them; intercede on their behalf, and give thanks for them." (1 Timothy 2:1) Everyone includes our neighbors, coworkers and classmates, as well as family and friends. All believers are obligated to care for those around them. The very words of Jesus instructed believers to, "Love your neighbor as yourself." (Matthew 22:39) We are all challenged by Jesus to, "be His witnesses" (Acts 1:8) to "go and make disciples" (Matthew 28:19) and to "be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks." (1 Peter 3:15) All of these commands require faith sharing.¹⁹

God has chosen to work in this world through the prayers of His people. Lighthouses work because when we pray, God works. His grace is released and His power directed through prayer. Building relationships with those who do not know Jesus is not hard. Many people welcome prayer and are open to those who pray for and care about them. Relationships can lead to faith-sharing opportunities. Most people who

¹⁹ Ibid.

come to Christ today come through the influence of a person with whom they have a secure relationship.²⁰

The Lighthouse model suggests evangelist start with those who are closest to them—a family member, friend, or a confidant. These people may be the most open, and our greatest responsibility is to those whom God has put near us. Then, the model encourages evangelists move on to those with whom one has a casual relationship such as coworker, fellow student or a friendly neighbor. The more comfortable a person is with the evangelist, the more likely he or she will respond to prayer/care initiatives. The model also reminds evangelists to be concerned also for the cautious—an acquaintance, wary neighbor, guarded coworker, teammate or attendant. They may also, over time, be responsive to prayers and “love” for them.²¹

Praying BLESS for Results

According to the training video five important ways to pray for your neighbors or your neighborhood is to imagine the things that could be going wrong in any family and pray the Lord will answer those needs. These are categorized in the acronym **BLESS**. **B** represents bodily needs such as health, protection, and strength. The next letter is **L**, which deals with Labor that includes employment, income and financial security. Then **E** stands for Emotional needs that are not visible. For example, you pray for joy, peace, comfort, and inner quiet for a family in your block. The first letter **S** stands for Social needs such as love, marriage, family and friends. You could pray for unity in the family. The other **S** represents Spiritual, which is the main purpose for the Lighthouse

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

Evangelism so you pray for salvation, an increase of faith and the grace of God upon the family.

In all these prayers we have to remember that the devil is at work and has placed people in bondage that they may not pay attention to the things of God. It is the Lighthouse Focus Group member's duty to pray for God to set the captives free, unravel what the devil might have done in the spirit realm, but could be defeated through prayer.

A prayer list is compiled beginning with those who are closest and most open to the Focus Group. They make commitment to pray for those on the prayer list at least five times a week. The Holy Spirit is asked for the help needed to do this. A regular time and place is set, to pray for those on the list. The group was asked to start by building a relationship with each person they will be praying for and learn as much as they can about these neighbors, the names of family members, their co-workers, friends, interests, concerns and needs. Then they were to start a prayer-walk of the chosen Lighthouse neighborhoods. While in preparation for their objectives, the group was to try and understand what life is really like for their friends, acquaintances and coworkers by putting themselves in their shoes. They were to look for acts of kindness to perform, love people just for the sake of loving them and remember how much these people matter to God. It should be like letting God love the people through them.

The Lighthouse Focus Group was informed during training that salvation takes place when people are preached to, which means somehow someone has to "hear" the good news (Romans 10:14). Therefore they were to ask the Lord to open a door of opportunity for them to personally present the gospel. The next important thing to do was for the group to distribute Christian books or video that focuses on Christ, and to

involve those they engage with in a Bible study or take them to a church service or an evangelistic event where they will hear a gospel message. Every member was to know that it was not about anyone's power but the gospel, which is the Power of God that was to bring salvation to the people who believe.

Members of the Focus Group were encouraged in all that they did to dedicate their time to persistent prayer for those they were to intercede for. As they prayed, to ask God to deepen and strengthen their prayer life and to pray with a clean heart and a willing spirit. Their focus was to be like Jesus in kindness, caring and to stay compassionate toward the unsaved and those hurting around them. They were to spend time with those who will open their hearts or homes to them for a relationship. The group was to adhere to the saying, "God gave a person one mouth and two ears because He wants us to listen more and speak less." Therefore the Focus Group was to always listen attentively to whomever they proclaimed the Word.

They were to trust in the Lord in order to come through whenever He wishes, not in their timetable of expectation for quick results, but to expect some responses to come quickly when God delivers, and others to delay according to His time. The aim of the Lighthouse Evangelism was not just about winning souls but also to proclaim the Word of God making sure Christ was shared to the un-churched. It was ideal to win souls, but souls convicted by the Holy Spirit and accept their fate to be Christians. This could be winning many souls immediately after they hear the Word or years after preaching to them that they might turn their lives over to God. The group was to acknowledge that everything done to reach out to the un-churched, the Word of God should not be compromised, but held at a high standard.

The Focus Group was reminded in training that as they did their part, they should also wait for God to do His part by working through them. It will always be His power released through their prayers, His love channeled through caring and His gospel through sharing. All that was needed from the group was an effort in partnership with God and in the end there could be an exciting and fulfilling presence that would shadow the hardships of the evangelism life. The evidence of their work should be expected through new and growing relationships and souls won for Christ. They were expected to acquire experience as evangelists and the incredible joy of seeing others experience the work of Christ as their crowning point of fulfillment.

The Focus Group members were then instructed on the entire Lighthouse Evangelism project, which included the selection and planning stage, the designing of the project, the implementation and the conclusion or the outcome stage. The four stages stemmed from the commencement of the project to its accomplishment.

It began with the selection of the Lighthouse Evangelism model, to strategizing or a planning stage on how to initiate and set things in motion. This was followed by the implementation of the project and finally, the conclusion of the work. There was a theological dimension to the Lighthouse project, which was compared to the discipleship of Jesus Christ the Son of the living God. The Word of God tells us that before Jesus left this earth, He had one passion for His followers and it was, for them to shine as beacons of light to the lost world. Just as Jesus is the Light of the world, every one of His followers like we are is to be a point of reference as a Lighthouse showing the way home to Him. That was what establishing the Lighthouses were about, to let people know Christ as the Savior of the world.

Lighthouse Evangelism Viewed As Holistic Evangelism

Holistic evangelism is best described by the model that Jesus used:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives And recovery of sight to the blind, To set at liberty those who are oppressed; To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord. (Luke 4: 18-19)

This passage was explored through discussions by the Lighthouse Focus Group to discern whether our aim was to go out into the community just to enlighten people about Jesus and win souls or to also help the people to come out of their difficulties and needs. The Lighthouse Focus Group decided that while we would try to win souls to Christ it was also clear that the act of praying and caring was serving needs. For this reason the aim of the Lighthouse Evangelism was to promote evangelism holistically without discrimination to any person as noted by Calvin Kendrick²² who observed that, “[e]vangelism is not limited to a place, time, ministry or gender.”²³ Thus, it was the intent of the Lighthouse Focus Group to pursue the type of evangelism that would address the Word of God to all people without leaving anyone out. (Luke 15:3-7) In other words Lighthouse Evangelism offers a model of restoration to all people.

The work of evangelism calls for all of God’s children to receive salvation. We were not to limit evangelism to ‘just having enough people to help pay the expenses of the church.’ We also engaged in holistic evangelism; the evangelism that deals with the creation of inclusiveness. Humanity was created to embody the physical, emotional,

²² Calvin Kendrick, “Holistic Evangelism: A New Model of Doing Evangelism in the Urban Environment from an African-American Perspective” (D.Min. diss., New York Theological Seminary, 2002)

²³ Ibid., 16.

social, intellectual and spiritual. Jesus established the pattern of true evangelism as how to minister to the whole person. He healed the sick, fed the hungry and comforted the bereaved. While communicating the Gospel message, pointing people to his father, Jesus demonstrated his care not only for the souls of his followers but also for their other needs. He communicated the Good News of the Kingdom of God through both words and deeds.²⁴

The Hebrew Bible states that converts deserve special attention (Deuteronomy 10:19). The Hebrew word for "convert", *ger*, is the same as that for a *stranger*. It is also related to the root *gar* - to dwell. Since the Children of Israel were "strangers", *geirim* in Egypt, they were instructed to extend a hand to those who sought to convert and dwell amongst them. The Lighthouse Evangelism also looked into different aspects of needs of individuals in a holistic sense by Praying, Caring and feeding the un-churched with the Word of God. In addition to accepting them as one of our own Christian brothers and sisters, those who decided on conversion were assigned mentors and trained on Lighthouse Evangelism to extend the same opportunity they had received from the Lighthouse Focus Group through witnessing to others.

Evangelism has specific goals and one of them is proclaiming the gospel or saving souls spiritually. God's salvation for humanity on earth is seen evangelistically as well as holistically because He created everything and He is not limited in what He does. As evangelism seeks to bring people into a new relationship with God through Jesus Christ I feel strongly that a formal evangelism strategy must be in place in the church to reach the greater harvest of people. Through the power of the Holy Spirit the purpose of

²⁴ William J. McKay, *Me, an Evangelist? Every Christian's Guide to Caring Evangelism* (St. Louis, Missouri: Stephen Ministries, 1992).

evangelism endeavors to awaken repentance, commitment, and faith. Its goal is nothing less than the conversion of the sinner to a radically new way of life.

How, then, do we know when evangelism has taken place? When the message has been given? When the message has been adequately understood? When the hearer has been brought to the point of deciding for or against the message he or she has received? In some instances God's time to draw someone is inevitable, the individual, is drawn to God by the Holy Spirit and they react or make instant decisions. It is a decision that may seem like people are deciding on their own and some are purposely refusing to surrender but the final decision is made by God. "For no one can come to me unless the Father who sent draws them to me, and at the last day I will raise them up." (John 6:44)

Theologically, of course, the results of evangelism are in the hands of the Spirit, not the evangelist. But practically, the bearer of the message determines to a large extent the scope of the hearer's response because he or she has stated the terms of the invitation. Although evangelism by definition concentrates on the need to respond to God in initial repentance and faith, its message must also contain the obligations of Christian discipleship. To embark on discipleship, one would have to be adequately trained in the Word and practical experience by the elders of the church or people with evangelism outreach experience. I believe there is no perfect evangelist, but a beginner with some knowledge like the Lighthouse Focus Group had, is a good start.

It is every Christian's responsibility to evangelize to bring about hope that would bring lost creation back into our communities with the fear of God. In the same way God used someone to proclaim the Word, so that we could be saved. So is the Lord calling everyone through His saving power to win others to Him. Every Christian needs to

evangelize because God does not want any of His children to perish, and there are many who have not heard the Word of God or refuse to adhere to the gospel. When we surrender our lives to Christ, then we are saying He is our Lord and Savior and we love Him. If that is true, then He says, “If you love me, obey my commandments,” and His will is to, “Therefore, go and make disciples of all nations...” (John 14:15 & Matt. 28:19)

Selection of Lighthouse Evangelism

The Lighthouse Evangelism was chosen in agreement with my site team members (see page *vi* on acknowledgments), which was comprised of four experienced individuals of the Church of God of East Flatbush congregants. These individuals have an average service of 23 years in leadership positions of the church. Their experience was helpful in determining the needs of the church and what could be accomplished. In my first month of relocating to the Church of God of East Flatbush I was led by the Bishop and senior pastor of the church to select these individuals for my site team. There were discussions on evangelizing in the Spanish community within District 17 of the Church of God of East Flatbush neighborhood. This idea came up because there were no Spanish congregants in the church and the church’s vision is “Making disciples to impact the world.” The choice of a Spanish community was good but it was seen as being discriminatory and impossible to just look for a particular ethnicity instead of trying to win people from all nationalities.

There was also a consideration of doing Holistic Evangelism (Evangelism of the Body, Spirit and the Soul). Although this topic of Holistic Evangelism was suggested, none of the site team members showed an interest in it and the idea was placed

in abeyance. The Lighthouse Evangelism was the 3rd topic proposed and it was seen as a package that could be used for all cultures. We agreed on the Lighthouse Evangelism in a heartbeat because it was seen as very applicable to improve the needs of evangelism in the church. In addition it was my focused plan from a previous church and the site team readily consented to the idea because the church needed an evangelism model that could measure the evangelism program in place. The Lighthouse Evangelism is easy to record data on people who was baptized or converted through its outreach.

Why Evangelism of the Un-churched?

According to Barna (see footnote on page 4), the un-churched is defined to include those who have never attended a Christian church or have stopped attending church services for over six months not including holiday services such as Easter, Christmas and New Year's Eve.²⁵ The un-churched are also attracted to the coastal regions of the nation. The most likely reason for the prominence of the un-churched in the coastal regions of the nation could be the laissez faire lifestyle of different ethnic cultures and the fact that no one cares about each other's business in a multicultural society in such areas. A typical example is living in New York City, the freedom to lead your life the way you want, you could decide to break public laws and nothing can stop you from doing your own thing. It is also explained by this quote from Barna research group:

The un-churched are more likely than others to be somewhat isolated from the mainstream activities of the society in which they live. They see themselves as outsiders and often take refuge in that status. Evidence of this arms-length approach to life, beyond their refusal to participate in church life, includes lower levels of voter registration, less money donated

²⁵ George Barna, *User Friendly Churches* (Ventura California: Regal Books, 1991)

to non-profit organizations, fewer non-profits supported, lower levels of media usage, and less engagement in community service activities.²⁶

Although just four out of ten adults (42%) live in the Northeast or West, more than half of the un-churched (51%) live there. In fact, two of the largest states in the nation California and New York contain 18% of the nation's residents, but almost one quarter of its un-churched adults (23%).²⁷

During the months of May, June and July of the year 2007, I was privileged with my Lighthouse Focus Group (LFG) to enter the East Flatbush community in Brooklyn, New York to evangelize the Lighthouse way. This community reflects many areas in New York City with people from all types of religious backgrounds including the un-churched. We interacted with the un-churched, prayed with them, socialized with them, and witnessed to them.

Most of the un-churched were readily available in the areas where they hangout in the neighborhood of the church and they were willing to answer our questions and to share their grievances and complaints about what they thought about either the church or Christians in general. On the part of the un-churched, we reached out to about twenty-four (24) people exceeding our target to survey twenty (20) people in the Church of God of East Flatbush neighborhood. This was for the pre-Lighthouse Evangelism survey. The 25 (20 volunteers plus 5 site team) members of the Lighthouse Focus Group were sent out into the church's neighborhood with a ten-question survey form (see Appendix AA) to find out what the un-church perceive about Christians and whether they wanted to be a part of the church.

Some of the questions asked were as follows:

²⁶ Ibid., 65.

²⁷ Ibid., 36.

Would they come to church if someone invited them to some special event in the church? 92% responded, yes. Yet when we invited most of the un-churched to our Lighthouse project celebration only a handful showed up. This was likely the fault of the Lighthouse Evangelism team for poor communication, lack of advertisement and insufficient resources to reach all the people with whom we made contact. Hopefully the Lighthouse Evangelism might have changed additional people that we encountered briefly without collecting any information on them and we believe by faith that people we met will be changed according to God's time-table. Like the Apostle Paul, we had sown a seed of the Word of God to the people and God would bring about change in His time. Lighthouse Evangelism of caring for others gave us easier access to reach out to the un-churched and invited some of them to our church, an invitation most of them said they needed to enable them to observe firsthand what our church is like before deciding to join. Many of the un-churched also said that during a visit to a church they needed someone to explain the way of salvation to them. Therefore during one of our evening walk-through in the Church of God of East Flatbush community, we met these two middle-aged males who asked, "if they have been predestinated to be children of God?" I went with them through the Bible and as a seminarian, read through Ephesians 1:4 with them. I used my limited knowledge of Greek to explain to them that, there are two Greek words in that verse.

Exeléxatō meaning "chosen out of" and in this context it meant that at one particular time in the past, God chose individuals for salvation. (Matthew 24:31)

The other Greek word *Proorisas* means, “to determine beforehand or predestinate” which denotes the concept of man’s free will to choose his or her destiny. The second part shows why Jesus came and died for us, He did not die for one but for all.

In 1 John 2:2 the writer states, “He himself is the sacrifice that atones for our sins- and not only our sins, but the sins of all the world.” Whosoever believes in Him, can therefore obtain salvation. The two friends were still pessimistic and it appeared as if they were mocking the Lighthouse Focus Group or may be their time for salvation is in the future. One of them commented again that, “If there was a God who could change them, they should have been changed.” Then I replied that if they become believers they will understand that God alone knows the point at which a person receives Christ for salvation, and we departed.

When the un-churched were asked, “How do you view preachers after the many scandals both on television and in the church? Many of un-churched people we met were not worried about previous scandals of the televangelists that had plagued the church. For example, I related the story of Jimmy Swaggart’s exposure of a fellow televangelist, Jim Bakker’s sexual indiscretion to the nation in 1986, which led to Bakker’s conviction and imprisonment to some men who said they did not believe Jesus or the church. Then I continued by saying that two years later in February 1988 Jimmy Swaggart was also caught in a sexual tryst with a prostitute. This was not essential to these men, but rather one of them said, “What goes around comes around.” While these particular men were nonchalant about the happenings in the church, some of the Lighthouse Focus Group encountered a view of the un-churched in another section of the neighborhood. These people were outright critical of the hypocrisy of some ministers, and the way they live a

lavish life with expensive cars and big mansions. When the un-churched are asked if such preachers, should take money from the poor, the reply was almost always no. On only one of the returned survey forms someone agreed with the preachers, that they should collect money in order for the church to be blessed. This came from someone who was brought up in the church as a teenager. In all these we found that most of the un-churched are not unaware of what is happening in the church. Quite a few of them talked about unfriendly experiences with the church that have kept them from being a part it. A couple of them made mention of *liberation theology* and how it has softened the firm proclamation of the Word of God.

In one instance a man who had turned to the religion of Rastafarianism talked about how his mother was a Christian for forty years and when she had cancer, the priest did not come to her aid neither did the *White-god* (referring to the Christian God) cure her. I tried to understand why anyone would call the God of the Bible a *white-god* and it dawned on me that this man mentioned that the true Israelites were from Egypt in Africa therefore no one can claim the status of a Jew and be light in complexion. This argument does bother me because I know that the Bible states that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and when King Herod sought his death, his earthly father had a dream in which he was ordered by God to send the baby to Egypt until the death of Herod. Also as an African, I know that a majority of the people in North Africa is light in complexion, which disproves the statement that all Africans are dark in complexion. Based on this man's ideas and the Rastafarian teachings he does not believe in the church or our God.

The next question that the Lighthouse Focus Group posed to the un-churched was, "Have you ever attended any church service?" This was to get the idea of how the un-

churched felt about formal church services, whether they disliked it or embraced the setting of a church. On this issue, many of the un-churched responded, yes to having attended a church service before. About 46% have had church experiences from their youth, either with parents or with friends. From the most uncooperative un-churched person we encountered to the most receptive, most had visited a church before for a baby dedication, confirmation or an occasional church visit like attending Christmas church service with friends or a family member. Some were taken to church by their parents when they were young and others had previously been members of churches and left for various reasons. Others had visited one or more churches for trial basis that is to listen to preachers if the Word of God is preached to their liking. Others went in search of programs that they could affiliate with, before deciding to leave. The broad knowledge of what happens in the church by the un-churched diffuses the assumption that all un-churched persons are clueless about the church. A majority of the un-churched recalled what had happened during church attendance in the past. Most of the un-churched are well informed about the church and their number one complaint centers around money issues in the church. It is either the church asks for too much money collections or they believe the money is being squandered for ungodly purposes. Some had negative experiences such as there are too many gossipers in the church, things I found to be trivial. Others who went as children dropped out when their parents dropped out. And a number of un-churched tried church but left unimpressed and uninspired.

The attitudes of the un-churched are not correlated to where they live, their ethnic or racial background, or their gender. In other words, the un-churched could not be judged by the way they looked or what we initially perceived. Some are well read with

so much information on the history of the church one would stay away from hot discussions that could lead to arguments. The un-churched are not a monolithic group. There are all types of nationalities of Africans in the Diaspora with knowledge that transcends the biases of people about Blacks. That reality came through with the people that we met and the responses we received. One cannot therefore expect a certain attitude from an un-churched person from New York just because he or she lives in East Flatbush. We could not describe the common characteristics of an African-American un-churched person or those of a Caribbean-American. The variety of responses within each ethnic group was significant. The only pattern we saw was related to income. The higher an individual's income level, the more resistant to the gospel he or she was likely to be. Entering into the East Flatbush neighborhood, there were some great mansions that revealed an influence of higher status neighbors either with a position of authority in the community or wealth acquired through questionable means. Yet in most of these homes it was difficult to find anyone to witness to or care for, because they flatly refused our help or they could not devote the time to listen. I cannot discuss the religious background of the people living in such homes. The situation does however call to mind, Jesus Himself warning us of the power of money being like a god to us: "In fact, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." (Mark10:25)

Many of the un-churched did not believe in unannounced type of visitation to their homes like the Jehovah Witnesses knocking on doors at random. Because they believe it is awkward and it might intrude in their quiet time. For these reasons, I became

optimistic about the Lighthouse Evangelism, which had a different plan and design to reach out to the people.

The Lighthouse Evangelism requires that a member build a relationship before paying a visit to anyone and the visit should be solely through invitation in order not to drive the un-churched away. With the Lighthouse Evangelism there was no need to enter any home without first having a dialogue with the person and also one had to wait to be invited or wait for God's appointed time to cross paths with the person to evangelize. Based on the Lighthouse Evangelism we learned that the majority of the un-churched preferred to develop a real and sincere relationship with Christians before opening up their homes to them.

The process of the Lighthouse Evangelism as compared to "in your face" tract distribution and knocking on people's doors (to be called from now on "the old way of evangelism"), is simpler and less confrontational. The old way of evangelism is very threatening to the average Christian and the unbeliever as well, because you do not know who is coming your way and what the intention of the person is. Thus there is no proof of credibility, and only a few people have the courage to do something of which they are not sure. The old way of evangelism, knowingly or unknowingly, conveys a degrading message to a neighbor in the sense that the evangelist may not know who the person is and yet the evangelist is telling him/her either, 'you are not a Christian' or 'you have not been doing your work as a Christian.' In other words, you are saying, "I have a solution for your bad behavior," or "Your life is not right". This is a negative approach that communicates a condescending message.

Most of the old ways of evangelism result in confrontation without a positive outcome. As I delved into the five types of common evangelism described by George Barna, Lifestyle or Friendship evangelism, Family evangelism, Confrontational evangelism, Cell-Group evangelism and Power evangelism, I felt some discomfort with all of them. Either there is a forced relationship or there is a disregard for people's ability to make up their own minds.

On the other hand, the Lighthouse Evangelism starts by prayer walking in the chosen community or areas selected for winning souls. We prayed prayers of blessings and peace of God into families and their homes. It was done in faith, because we did not know what outcome our prayer walks were going to reap. As humans, this is the most volatile stage of the Lighthouse Evangelism, waiting on the Lord for an answer. After the prayer walks were done (see Chapter 7 for detailed a detailed description of the walks), we waited cautiously and vigilantly for chances to do an act of caring, or kindness for neighbors or persons we might meet. When the opportunities for the act of caring came, we jumped on them and did our part of benevolence. In this manner we did not force people or disrespect anyone. People came to us, I believe, by the blessings of God and we did the act. The one time act of kindness often opened the door for a relationship, instead of knocking on doors to disturb others. The latter could prevent you from getting a chance to dialogue with someone while the former gives you great opportunities to care or love someone. Gradually as relationships were built, the time for sharing the word arrived.

Here is a story by a Lighthouse Focus Group member, called Sister Barb who chose her Brooklyn neighborhood for a Lighthouse:

She was known in her neighborhood as the ‘Christian lady’ because she was always seen with her Bible in hand coming or going to church. Whenever she passes by her neighbors she would greet them with politeness. Then one Wednesday evening after mid-week service in church, she arrived home and saw about five young men she sees often in her neighborhood hanging out in the front of the building upset and discussing some issue very loudly. She panicked, and wanted to turn back from going their direction, but one of the young men called her, “Christian Lady we are waiting for you.” As she approached them she was told the police just arrested one of their friends. He had been taken to the nearby precinct for smoking and possession of marijuana and for resisting arrest. Then, they said none of them could bail him out because of their criminal records. They asked if she could do them a favor by going with them to bail him out. This sister was scared, but prayed discreetly and went with them. She recounted her ordeal of waiting five hours before the man was brought to central booking to see a judge and she helped gain his release. The next day three of the men came with a friend to thank her and promised to one day come to church with her. None of them has visited the church as yet, but they hold this sister in high regard now in the neighborhood. They offered their support to watch out for her, but she said, I do not need their protection. I have God on my side.²⁸

Based on the Lighthouse Focus Group statistics, many such chances opened up. These showed the established credible relationship between the Lighthouse Focus Group and the community. Easy contacts with the new found friends opened the way for exchanging some very intimate stories. The area that we saturated in the beginning with prayers was won to the Lord Jesus Christ by the fact that many of the people that gave their lives to the Lord came from within District 17. In addition, most of the people in the neighborhood offered cordial invitations to the Lighthouse Focus Group members to visit their homes, a relationship that has continued post Lighthouse Evangelism demonstration project.

Eventually, some of the Lighthouse Focus Group had the opportunity to hear stories upon stories from their new friends. Some were afraid of the church because of

²⁸ Beverly Adams, Report of Lighthouse Focus Group Members, June 20, 2007.

past experiences and that prevented them from accepting Christ. In one instance the leader of the Lighthouse Focus Group, Sister Beverly Adams, told this story:

I was led into a lady's home who had breast cancer and was scared to go for surgery, so we prayed together and she gathered courage to do it. Since I knew the woman was scheduled to go for chemotherapy after the surgery and would loose her hair, I offered to cut my own hair and donate it to the hospital to make a wig for the lady. This act, drew her to church to come and thank me.²⁹

Unfortunately, at the time of finishing my demonstration project report, this lady died in January 2008 and her body was flown to the Caribbean island of Barbados. Sister Beverly Adams did her last act of caring by attending the funeral and burial services in Barbados.

Relative to the above story, numerous prayers were reported answered; these were in the form of physical healing, employment, emotional healing, social and spiritual healings. These are just a few of the many. These are reflective of the Lighthouse Focus Group reporting their various acts most of which offer at least a modicum of specific acts that brought about change in individual's lives, homes or immediate surroundings. At least two hundred and six (206) direct acts of care were extended to a number of individuals. These acts could best be described as "without walls" because they were done from sincere hearts of the Lighthouse Focus Group.

Most often acts of caring and sharing were offered as a portion of what one possesses and then paving the way to sharing the Word of God with people. In some of these cases a number of acts were rendered directly. These selfless acts could only be compared to Jesus giving himself up selflessly to preaching the Word to people wherever he went while he was on earth--touching people's lives one at a time. In most of these

²⁹ Ibid.

acts of sharing, the bountiful results were undoubtedly evident in the souls that were won. Not only were these individuals given information about the Church of God of East Flatbush, but they were also told to look for other places of worship, which would be convenient for them.

Overall, approximately five hundred and forty one (541) individuals were prayed for and the Lord gave us favor to use the Lighthouse Focus Group to touch their lives.

The Lighthouse Evangelism is the believer's new tool to assume spiritual burden and responsibility within a community at the grassroots level. The burden is therefore not on us but on the Lord, ours is to obey by faith. For the Lord said "... I will build my church, and all the powers of hell will not conquer it." (Matthew 16:18) The Greek word in this passage for "church" is *ekklêsia*, meaning an assembly of God's people with the power to make final decisions. In other words, Jesus will make us an *ekklêsia*, an assembly which will have the keys to the kingdom of heaven and the "gates of hell" will not have power against His *ekklêsia* assembly. This does not mean His people will not die, but rather our immortality will be in the *next* life, in the spirit realm. Where the immortal assembly will be formed and Satan will not have power over God's Kingdom of immortal members. For this reason Christians should obey the call to evangelize that all people will hear the Word of God and make a choice to live eternally in heaven or die and go to hell.

Finally, I am persuaded that there is no other model of evangelism that is as peaceful, credible, non-threatening and non-confrontational as the Lighthouse Evangelism. I would recommend that all Christians become Lighthouses, wherever they are and the Lord will provide the increase. The end results of the old way of evangelism,

cause fewer believers to show interest. Therefore, many who would have liked to obey the “Great Commission” as commanded in Mark 16:15 did not or could not participate, but Lighthouse Evangelism is for all.

CHAPTER 4

EVANGELISM AND PRAYER

Lighthouse Evangelism Begins with Prayer

The main component of the Lighthouse Evangelism is its prayers. Since we do not go knocking on strangers' door, the only other source for us is praying for God to open access for charitable acts. In the beginning of our training workshop, prayer was introduced to a group of people who had been selected as the Lighthouse Focus Group (see footnote on page 2) by experienced leaders of the church. The trainers included an associate pastor, two ministers and three Sunday school teachers. These are qualified individuals who have either finished their Masters degree in divinity, counseling or social work and with long term experience in ministry.

At the original workshop training, over seventy people showed up and volunteered to be part of the Lighthouse Focus Group. We screened them by asking about their main interest in ministry and we also explained what Lighthouse Evangelism entailed. Based on these questionnaires (Form in Appendix A) some people dropped out. The remaining people were told that only the first twenty people who signed up could be used for the Lighthouse Focus Group. Everyone else was encouraged to participate in other programs of the church. There were many people at the training workshop who confessed that even though they were born again Christians, they did not know how to pray. Therefore special attention was given to this group to build confidence in them that everybody can pray.

Prayer by the Lighthouse Focus Group also meant prayer for the un-churched, we asked the Lord to draw them to Him (John 6:44), to open their ears to understand the truth (Matthew 13:19), and to open their eyes to see the light of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4). It also involved praying for each member that he or she may have compassion for the spiritual well-being of the un-churched and be opened to sharing the good news, as He opens the door of opportunity. Simply put, in our evangelistic praying we talked to God about people and then talked to people about God.

The Church of God of East Flatbush, like many churches, had engaged in a general form of evangelism. However, it had not always integrated evangelism with prayers in the way Lighthouse Evangelism suggests, which is praying BLESS (see page 30) on our neighbors. Attempts to be involved in evangelism with little or no prayer could be the reason for discouraging limited fruit. Without prayer, God's people also had lacked compassion and the conviction to be effective. If God does not take the initiative in the life of the unbeliever or the un-churched, as He promises to do in response to our prayers, we are limited to human resources and human understanding. It takes the supernatural power of God to release those who are unsaved (Matthew 17:21AV) and to open the eyes of those blinded to the light of the gospel (2 Corinthians 4:4). God will act in response to our specific prayers.

Without prayer, the church's evangelistic efforts could be burdensome, discouraging, and done out of duty. They may lack in the discernment which comes from the Holy Spirit (Acts 16:6-10) and miss the joy of seeing people come to the faith of God. Prayer produces lasting fruit (John 15:7-8, 16). Prayerlessness does not guarantee that evangelism will fail. God in His sovereign good pleasure may bring people to a saving

knowledge of Jesus Christ despite the lack of it. However, God prefers to work through his children and we have to make the effort. When believers pray faithfully and fervently (James 5:16) for those outside the kingdom, wonderful things happen and the Lighthouse Focus Group is witness to that effect. Evangelistic praying generates in the heart of the intercessor a Christ-like and Christ-engendered love that motivates the believer to reach out to lost persons and look for faith-sharing opportunities. God in turn often grants to such intercessors the discernment that further facilitates effective evangelism.

Evangelistic pray-*ers* are often among the first to hear and respond obediently to God's call for action. In other words, they do not simply look for God to intervene in response to their prayer; they report for action!

Evangelistic praying is for every believer – young or old, educated or uneducated, new believer or veteran saint. They can all pray for the lost, whether in their family, their neighborhood, their city, for whole nations or communities of people.

In order for the Lighthouse Focus Group to pray on our targets, the group prayed for discernment of God's purpose and His heart for lost persons or souls. Like Jesus, who always chose to do what He saw the Father doing, we had to discern what God wanted us to pray for and to do. The effectiveness of our prayers also depended on our human relationships with each other. Scriptures underscore the need to be reconciled to and at peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ and to experience the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace (Psalm 133:1; John 15:9-10, 17:22). An unforgiving spirit would also hinder our prayers (1 Peter 3:7). The attitude of our hearts would also affect the quality of our prayers. The Bible is replete with reminders of how to pray. It challenges us to pray by faith, knowing that God will answer those who do not doubt

(James 1:6) and with childlike trust to expect that God will reward (Hebrews 11:6). As we prayed, in order to be effective in evangelism, there was the intention of building a loving relationship with those who lived and worked around the areas of Lighthouses. In praying BLESS, we sought the very best for the people and relationships with them as well. The group expected such relationships to lay the groundwork for caring and sharing the Word of God. We learned to be ready at all times with an obedient heart, to serve a needy and hurting world in the name of Jesus Christ in practical ways (Isaiah 58:9) and to be available to be used by the Lord whenever and wherever the opportunity arose.

Outcome of Prayer in Evangelism

Many things happened when the Lighthouse Focus Group joined together to pray for the community and the un-churched. There was a sphere of influence the neighborhood of Lighthouses opened up, things that would not have happened without prayers (Ephesians 3:20). This was true of the Lighthouse Focus Group, because all the power of prayer was God's power released through our prayers. In reference to evangelism there is an obvious understanding that God does nothing except in answer to prayer, and prayer is not just the answer to evangelism, but the key. Something happened when the Lighthouse Focus Group prayed for hearts to be softened and changed. People were cleansed of sin and turned to God for repentance. Some were delivered from bondage, satanic deception, strongholds were broken such that individuals started to call and invite us into their homes. We also prayed that members of the whole Church, every man, woman and child be unburdened and motivated to play their part in the Great Commission by utilizing prayer as the key to be effective and creative in evangelism.

The Focus Group was taught to pray especially for “God to free those who are in bondage to the evil one, giving them light to see, ears to hear, open minds and responsive hearts.”³⁰ They were encouraged to start with a prayer of confession for any failure to pray, or care or share in the past. Having done that, then they were trained to make a Lighthouse prayer list beginning with those who are relationally closest and most open to them. In addition, it was necessary for the Lighthouse Focus Group members to make a commitment to pray for those individuals at least five times a week and ask the Holy Spirit for the help they needed. Members were to set a regular time and place to pray for those on their lists. These lists were also to be used for the individual lighthouse locations.

We began the first outing with a prayer walk in the community, by dividing the area into five sections and then sending the people out in groups of four with a designated leader. This was done once per week for three weeks in the Church of God of East Flatbush community until everyone felt confident to either be by themselves or evangelize with a partner. The first outing was for the entire group to do a prayer walk in the neighborhood of the church. The plan was to pray around two blocks to the north and south of the church and a width of about a block each to the east and west (see page 54). We started on a Wednesday, an hour and half before the mid-week service. I took responsibility for getting people together. I arrived in the front of our church building two hours early to strategize our plan. Normally my site team would also show up early but this was a working day and not everyone had the liberty to leave work. As the people showed up, I paired them in groups of four with a group leader, someone from the

³⁰ “Lighthouses Information,” <http://www.missionamerica.org/Bnx> (accessed June 2007).

church's existing evangelism team with experience. Then we prayed for the Lord's protection and anointing upon the group before going out into the neighborhood.

There were four groups sent out to the four assigned sections of the neighborhood and three young adults arrived together afterwards so I joined them for our prayer walk. Since my group was not part of the four assigned sections, we agreed to walk by the shops on Church Avenue between 93rd and 96th streets, the busiest business area in the neighborhood. (See Appendix G)

My group looked at the shop signs and prayed for increase to their business and also for un-churched and the unsaved to be won for Christ. Others prayed for better health, and for chronic illnesses to be healed. We prayed for those mourning or in any kind of bereavement to be comforted by the presence of God. An important need for the neighborhood was for those who are unemployed which ties in with poverty and homelessness. While walking and praying we pronounced blessings upon the people in the neighborhood and asked for God's intervention for family restorations. The prayer walks continued not only in the neighborhood of the church, but also in areas throughout New York City which members of our group chose as their Lighthouses.

Those who chose other places instead of the church's community neighborhoods were instructed to begin their prayer walks by first identifying five buildings in each direction in their neighborhoods, then to list some names they knew and to pray for them in those homes as they did their prayer walks in their neighborhoods. Everyone was asked to do at least three prayer walks in his/her area while looking out for an opportunity to care for the people in the neighborhood. The Lighthouse Focus Group completed one hundred and sixty-three prayer walks and the results were positive and overwhelming.

The prayer walks I believe opened so many avenues for the act of caring all over New York City. The very first day of the prayer walks by the five groups that went out in fives, the group that prayed one block south of the church came back with big smiles on their faces.

It was after the general prayer walk sections were completed that almost all the Lighthouse Focus Group members began their individual lighthouses in other places. The base for the Lighthouse Evangelism was the church's neighborhood. It was the learning center, a place to gain experience before moving on. I stayed with the group that walked in the church's neighborhood because it was convenient for me and those who live in the community. It was also a focal point accessible to all those who wanted to consult with my site team members and me. There was no restriction of having the Lighthouse in the neighborhood of the church, but the most convenient area for individuals could be chosen for their Lighthouse Evangelism.

In the past, the Church of God of East Flatbush set up prayer stations in parks, at block parties and the entrances to subway stations, and at soccer and basketball games. The prayer station functions similar to the Lighthouse Evangelism of care, in that it draws people to it for help. Implementation of the prayer station had slowed down at time of the Lighthouse Evangelism, therefore the Lighthouse Focus Group participated in resurrecting the prayer station evangelism as a Lighthouse Focus Group stand to attend to prayer needs of the people. It was used as a caring center, to meet prayer needs of the people in the neighborhood. This was a complementary outlet to the Lighthouse Evangelism because after the prayer walks the Lighthouse Focus Group waited for opportunities to help or care for those in need. It was a very successful adventure in that

through the prayer stations many avenues for prayers and care for needs were provided. For example, there was a man who showed up at the prayer station with walking cane and four of the Lighthouse Focus Group members surrounded him and prayed for about fifteen minutes. In the course of the praying, he felt a burning sensation through his hurting leg and let go of his cane and he was healed instantly. He asked the group if he could leave his cane for them because he could walk, but he was told to take it with him home as evidence. He walked away without using it.

The Lighthouse Focus Group completed one hundred and sixty-three (163) prayer walks during the three months period of the project. During this period doors were opened and some members of Lighthouse Focus Group were invited to homes to pray for the sick, the unemployed and broken family relationships. The Lighthouse Focus Group was also equipped with business-like personal prayer cards and contact cards (see Appendix D) stating what they were doing and their contact numbers. The concept of the business-like cards was implemented after a well thought-out process based on the vision of busy lives in New York City. This was to give a brief exchange between the Lighthouse Focus Group and their contacts for follow-up prayers. This was eventually found to be quite effective especially when dealing with average individuals who were willing to accept a card handed to them rather than spending time in discourse.

A total of three hundred and eleven (311) prayer requests were received with some requesting a home visitation by one of our members. Thirty-nine (39) individuals attended follow-up services at the Church of God of East Flatbush, twenty-two (22) of whom accepted Jesus as their personal Savior. Relative to the above, numerous prayers were reported answered. The Lighthouse Focus Group also reported about some

improved health. A crippled woman was healed, an atheist acknowledged God as his only help out of a difficult situation. Family relationships were restored, successful surgeries and successful examinations were witnessed. These were in the form of physical healing, employment, emotional healing, social and spiritual healings. These were some of the tremendous happenings that took place, and there was no doubt in my mind that God was at work in the lives of His people.

Lighthouse Evangelism & the COGOEF Community

The original Church of God is believed to have a strong foundational belief in having provisions to nurture the soul while caring and providing for physical needs. This history has been extended to the Church of God of East Flatbush and it was explored and the outreach strategy carefully followed. Based on my personal experience the spirit of the church is very accommodating to all people as a family. There is a great love and courtesy accorded to all people and a cordial support for one another is a wonderful witness, especially to those who visit the church. What the church needs to improve on is the outreach program and much more evangelism in the community. More people were invited to join the evangelism team in order to reach most of the people in the community.

The Lighthouse project site team collected data from the evangelism team of our church listing former members and inactive members of the church. Based on the data, a random selection of 14 people who do not attend church as well as those who have discontinued fellowship with the church for one reason or another was identified and selected for outreach by trained individuals from the Lighthouse Focus Group (see footnote on page 2). The intent of the study was to establish reasons for non-attendance

of church services by both inactive members and the un-churched. In addition, the Lighthouse Focus Group wanted to know what means they could use to win the un-churched and how to sustain them if they do give their lives to Christ. All attempts were made to reach those who were once active through their last known telephone numbers and through visitations paid to known friends as well as enquiring by Lighthouse outreach questionnaire forms (see Appendix AA for form and questions asked). Each Lighthouse Focus Group member was asked to follow up with at least one person in order to reach our targeted number of twenty inactive members, but we were only able to reach 14 inactive members.

Upon identification of the targeted population and the completion of the interviews, the study showed the following statistics about the inactive: Fourteen inactive members were contacted directly by speaking to the individuals or indirectly by speaking to someone who knows the person. Seven or 50% of the people had relocated to either another borough or out of the New York State. Three or 21% had changed jobs and they claimed Sunday services were not convenient for them. The remaining four or 29% had family difficulties either with their children or marital problems with their spouses. The sample was too limited to represent accurately an entire church with a congregation of about 1,500. This is an area that the Lighthouse Evangelism would have to improve on, especially in the area of communication. We need to find out what can be done in order to reach out to our targeted group of the inactive who are out of the state or live outside of the borough of Brooklyn, where they used to reside.

The team devised a methodology to reach out to the inactive in the initial stage of the project. This was viewed to be necessary for the future of the Lighthouse

Evangelism. Whatever we learn as the cause for withdrawal or inactivity by a church member could be used to benefit someone in the future. In other words, the lesson learned from past experiences could be used for future improvement and retention of new converts. As mentioned previously, most of our contact connections were made through secondary sources, which were interviewing someone who knew the person instead of getting an audience with the actual person. This did not produce the positive results that we needed from the primary source. By reaching mostly friends and relatives of the inactive, we did not get enough data to contact majority of the people on our data list.

Many of the un-churched still perceived the church to be the most relevant and visible institution in society today. These people prefer to send their children to the Catholic and Christian schools because they love the discipline but would not be a part of the Church themselves.

Now if some of the un-churched see the church in such a positive light, of doing good things for society, and if they perceived the church to be responsive to their children's need why were they still un-churched? The answer seems to be twofold. First, they admitted to involving their children in the church but do not see it as selfishness or egoistic to take from a place they would not like to associate with. Rather they see this attitude as paying in exchange for services. Some said the unfriendliness, and the hypocrisy in the church turns them off. What is amazing is that most of these men and women still view the church positively after a negative experience. The second reason for not being able to attend church services is that some of them claimed to be working on weekends or taking their children to sporting events. Some of these excuses are genuine but others are difficult to understand. For the very same reason that almost every

one is able to go to work and function by planning a schedule, I believe we can all make a choice to serve the Lord if we know He is the key to our being alive and know Him as the Almighty God who has created all things, then I believe everyone will make room to serve Him even if it is impossible.

This reminds me of my first few months of arriving in the USA from Africa. I had my first good job at Mary Manning Walsh (A home for the elderly) on 70th street on York Avenue in New York City. I was employed as a pot washer and some of these pots were so huge I could hide in them. On my third week of employment I spoke to my supervisor of needing Sunday's off to serve in my church. His response was, "All of us are leaders in our church but we have to work to survive." Signifying I would never get Sunday off, so I quit that very day. Trusting in God that I would find another job and I did get a better job within two weeks of quitting in another nursing home for the elderly, which was close to my previous home in the Bronx and I had weekends off.

For example, the survey (See page 60-61 for inactive members survey results) of inactive members of the Church of God who were surveyed showed that 50% of them had relocated to another borough in New York City other than the borough of Brooklyn and that prevented them from coming to church. So on April 15, 2007 with the help of my site team members we questioned some active members of the church of God of East Flatbush congregation at random about where they live and commute to church in Brooklyn. To my utter surprise, I discovered that people from the church travel from as far as the borderline of New Jersey and Pennsylvania. Some members traveled from as far as Staten Island, the Bronx and Mount Vernon in the New York area to the Church of God of East Flatbush. In addition, there are some church attendees that I found were

former active members who have relocated to Florida and still fly in about twice a year to attend women's annual conference and the church's end of year banquet. If others can plan and come from as far as Florida to church at least twice a year then, there is no excuse for the inactive church members who have relocated to another borough in New York City. It is not a problem if someone states they found a church in their vicinity and it suits their needs or cut the cost of their travels. But for anyone Christian to stay out completely from any church because of the distance, is not a convincing excuse.

It was common that the un-churched, when interviewed by the Lighthouse Focus Group, responded positively to a genuine Christian who spent time with them in a gentle and non-judgmental relationship. How does this work? When a relationship with the un-churched pre-empted the sharing of the Word, the people were likely to accept what was said. It is like building trust in any relationship, either in marriage or even at the job; people tend to listen to you more. The people of the East Flatbush neighborhood started comparing the Lighthouse Focus Group to other Christian groups who had passed through the community with the idea of winning souls but just disseminated the message of Christ to them and left as quickly as they could. This reminded me of a comment made by one un-churched person in Dr. James Kennedy's book, *Evangelism Explosion*,

The other church people who pass through here did not seem interested to know about our problems as you guys do. They come from the rich neighborhood and just stopped by to preach about their God but we all know God.³¹

From this book, he teaches about a category of tools sometimes called "canned evangelism," which implies an uncaring, notch-belt approach to evangelism. When

³¹ James Kennedy, *Evangelism Explosion* (Wheaton: Illinois, Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1996), p.16. Dr. James Kennedy, was an American televangelist and founder of the Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale, Florida where he was senior pastor from 1960 until his death in 2007.

Christians used the “canned evangelism” method to witness to the un-churched with no obvious concern for the person, the un-churched immediately detected this impersonal approach.

CHAPTER 5

THE CHALLENGE OF CARING

Caring for the Needs of the Un-churched

The Lighthouse Focus Group (see footnote on page 2) was trained to look out for people who come their way, to be a light to them and respond with an act of caring.

Caring is defined as physical caring of individuals in need, who would approach if God opened the door for a relationship. This is the next act by the Lighthouse Focus Group after prayer walks in the neighborhood to get prepared for caring for the needs of the people who were to show for help. Through caring, a relationship is formed, and that leads to sharing the Word of God. The Word of God reflects this act of kindness or showing of love to all people: “Dear children, let’s not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions.”(1 John 3:18) The book of James in the Bible states this, “Faith without deeds is dead.” (James 2:26)

In the ten weeks after the Lighthouse Focus Group training and prayer walks in the neighborhood, we visited the community at least thrice a week according to the prayer walk pairing of the members, to look for people in need. We were ready to pray for the sick and give any physical help possible. For instance, we were ready to run errands for the elderly and talk to the lonely. This approach was conducted trusting in God for a good (as many people as the Lighthouse Focus Group of 25 can handle per a day) harvest of needs, as a result of our prayer walks, in order to give care to the people

in the church neighborhood of East Flatbush and other places of member Lighthouses.³² This was done with care, to prevent intrusion and interference on the part of the people and on the part of the Lighthouse Focus Group not to be thrown off course. In other words, it was an effort to care for people without disturbing their peace or offending anyone, thus preventing future visitation. We listened to the people for their needs and tried to answer questions about Lighthouse Evangelism. Where necessary a Lighthouse Focus Group member alerted the leaders of the group for additional need for caring and an available member was told to go and assist. This was not a regular occurrence, but on three occasions we were asked we were ready to invite the un-churched to do some things with us or visit our church. The invitation was not the most essential purpose of our being out there, but the fact that we were investing our lives in other people was what mattered to us. It takes time to care for some needs. For example, when praying for a sick person there is no guarantee when the person is going to get well, thus it takes spending time as often as possible in prayer for such an individual until God intervenes.

During the projected period of caring, every member of the Lighthouse Focus Group was instructed to fill out a weekly report form (See appendix AA) about any activity that took place either in the church community or their selected area of lighthouses to be discussed at our weekly Wednesday meetings with the site team. At these meetings we discussed the things we encountered at our various Lighthouses expressing how situations were handled and we worked on our achievements whether negative or positive. On some occasions even though the problems were resolved we discussed a better way to handle them in case we encountered a similar situation another

³² Member Lighthouses are in areas other than the COGOEF neighborhood chosen for Lighthouse Evangelism.

time. Based on that advice, the group was cautioned not to give answers readily unless they were sure of what the answers were. For example, someone wanted to know about the church's doctrine on child adoption and the Lighthouse Focus Group member said you could adopt anyone you want. I was not sure of the answer, so with total support of my site team members who led the Lighthouse Focus Group, we cautioned every member to wait until we get the accurate information from the church before answering. There is a wise African saying-- "One does not dress a bee sting in the midst of bees"-- meaning one should brood over difficult issues before solving them.

The Lighthouse Evangelism of caring therefore began with the Lighthouse Focus Group by trusting God with our personal strength in Christ and His strength in us. The group set out to be truthful and honest to the people they met putting forward their best behavior. The Lighthouse Evangelism therefore began in a context of mutual trust and respect for each other as well as for the people we were to meet. The acts of caring always took place between two or more people that is after someone from the community sees a Lighthouse Focus Group member and seeks help or the member offers to help. Most times a relationship was forged with the un-churched person in the community or at an individual area of a 'member Lighthouse' (see footnote on page 65) choice. In such occurrences the Lighthouse Focus Group member was generally easily accepted by the person or people to whom we were reaching out.

There are many men and women waiting for one of us Christians to come to their aide and to show them we really care. In the early stage of the Lighthouse Evangelism, we met some resistance from the un-churched who talked about their dislike for Christians and the Church as described earlier, but in the hearts of majority of them there

was a vacuum of need for someone. This does not show immediately because in the beginning many of the un-churched pretend to know it all or display toughness. However after knowing that the Christian is genuine, without any hidden motives, they begin to be real also. At this point, the Lighthouse Focus Group shared the Word and, when it fell on a good ground, a soul was won. Jesus desired that none would perish. In the midst of his packed schedule, He took time to show His love to sinners. I believe we can do likewise by reaching out to all people no matter how difficult it may seem at first.

Love as an Instrument for Evangelism

True love, as taught by Jesus in the Bible, was expressed to the people we reached out to and trust was established in contact between a Lighthouse Focus Group member and the un-churched. These relationships were nourished by the Lighthouse Focus Group members, when they called the newly found persons as often as possible to check on them. The relationships grew and became meaningful to the core and trust built up, with sharing of intimate problems with our members. Upon seeing some kind mutual understanding in the relationship being built, the Lighthouse Focus Group member or members took another step closer to the person or persons to embrace them. A step closer was sometimes as simple as a member paying a quick visit to someone's house to pray for them. At this point, when an individual or family need was related to a Lighthouse Focus Group member, the group member tried to provide a solution for this newfound friend.

As mentioned previously, the act of caring was instrumental for the Lighthouse Focus Group in gaining access to most of the un-churched. People love Jesus so much

because He loved them first, and also cared for their needs. "For God loved the world so much that He gave His one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life." (John 3:16) The Apostle Paul claims that love is firmly rooted in reality. Love, the Bible's kind of love, does not fail. It does not fail because it is of God, whose nature is love. God's love is different than human love. His love flows to people who do not deserve it and are unworthy of it. Yet He made the ultimate sacrifice for His people. "But God showed His great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners." (Romans 5:8) When Paul said, "Love never fails," he is not talking only about God's love; he is also talking about God's love in us and through us. He is reminding us that it is possible for us, with the love of God in our hearts, to love as God loves. This love is the power that moves a person to give to another without any expectation of a reward in the end. Such love does not fail because it is not based on another's behavior. Human love tells us, 'I will keep loving you as long as you meet my needs, as long as you are well-behaved, as long as you live up to my expectations'. But "love that never fails" does not allow the behavior of another human being to interrupt its commitment to a life of love. This is the way God expects us to relate to our neighbors, with never-failing love, a love that blesses, lifts, cares, and serves.

The Lighthouse Focus Group expressed the "love of a neighbor" as taught by Jesus in Matthew 22:39 and the community appreciated that they were genuine in caring for them. The Focus Group demonstrated love for others by devoting time to listen to their needs and showed them through practical acts of assistance to help solve their problems. There were instances that the people they met did not reveal things that concerned them to the group until they saw the Focus Group could be trusted. Then they

were invited by some people who had sick ones in hospitals to join them on visits to pray for their loved ones. Focus Group members were able to talk with those who opened up. Some were in great need because they were either sick or were bereaved and they needed someone to spend time with them, to talk to them or just listen to what they had to say. At the same time, whenever such demands for longer time were needed, caring became difficult because the Lighthouse Focus Group members were just volunteering and could not give too many hours on a single day.

One member of the Lighthouse Focus Group, Sister Joanna Edwards said, “One of the disadvantages of Lighthouse Evangelism, compared to using a fishing rod, it requires extensive amount of a believer’s time to yield results.” The Lighthouse Focus Group concentrated on what was important to the people and sometimes went out of their way to do good things for their neighbors that they had never done before, just be a friend to someone. For example, one of our young Lighthouse Focus Group member visited a wheel chair bound elderly woman and discovered that her visiting nurse had left the house. The elderly woman was craving a Jamaican beef patty and she asked to be wheeled to a takeout restaurant nearby her home, which our group member did. It was completely out of character because if any accident had occurred, the Lighthouse Focus Group member and our church could have been sued, but she felt in her heart she should comply. The two have remained friends until this day. In all these deeds, the Lighthouse Focus Group was sewing seeds, by allowing God's love to be poured through them to buildup or restore someone else.

To many of the Lighthouse Focus Group members, the caring evangelism came naturally to them because in the Caribbean Islands, where a majority of them came from,

it was a natural occurrence to help others in need without expecting anything in return. So they were comfortable with the situations they encountered and they did not push the people to get information from them. Rather, most of the un-churched volunteered information after knowing them and recognized they truly represented genuine servants of God. The Lighthouse caring evangelism helped most of us to grow and mature in rendering hospitality to others in need. Others learned that the work of God is not about sitting in church but giving service to people. This act of giving showed that as we learned to help others we also grew in caretaking and love for the chronically ill. Some among us especially the young had never been involved in these types of situations.

Knowing your community is essential, and our love for each person is also important. Do we seriously think that the Lord will use His providence to lead us to souls who are seeking for the truth? Even if we did reach souls for Christ, would they receive the spiritual nourishment necessary to remain faithful and strong in the Lord's service? It is important to practice hospitality towards the un-churched because it portrayed a different picture of Christians to the un-churched who claimed to know how uncaring and selfish the church and its people (Christians) are. The Lighthouse Evangelism required the willingness to be hospitable and giving to those we were trying to reach.

The Lighthouse Evangelism of Caring was well received and two hundred and six (206) direct acts of care were extended to a number of individuals. These acts could best be described as “without walls”. Our willingness to practice hospitality towards the un-churched, had a very positive outcome on our demonstration project.

CHAPTER 6

EVANGELISM BY SHARING

Sharing the Gospel in the Metropolis

The act of sharing the word came about after the many prayer walks in the church community and all the designated Lighthouse (see footnote on page 65) areas in the city. To the Lighthouse Focus Group, this was a time of harvest or the time to be fishers of people. It was the opportunity to bring people to the light of God, not by force or pride, but with caution and humility.

Most often acts of sharing were likened to offering a portion of what one possessed, and in these instances a number of acts were rendered directly based on our knowledge of the Word of God. These selfless acts could be compared to Jesus' walk while he was on earth -- touching people's lives one at a time; making a vast difference and requiring them to testify of Him. It began with the Lighthouse Focus Group having serious prayer sessions before our weekly Wednesday meetings to seek the face of God and asking for His leading to the people assigned to us as a group or as individuals.

In the past I had seen many church members who tried to share the Gospel with others but failed miserably because the un-churched did not adhere to the message that was proclaimed to them. In such occasions the Christians who disseminated or shared the Word of God were limited in their presentation, having very little to say beyond a prepared speech and partial answers to questions asked. One could make a case that these preachers who present the Word of God in such a shallow way were inadequately trained. In a way I perceived these ambassadors of Christ were also either not fully

prepared, unhappy or unfulfilled in their own walk with God and had very little to offer to the un-churched. On the other hand, the Lighthouse Focus Group was given all the necessary training and tools needed to proclaim the Word of God when needed. I am not talking about eloquence because Paul said to the Corinthians, “And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 2:4) In other words, it is the Spirit of God that gives power and the word to win the attention and the admiration of people. But those without the impact of the Holy Spirit may have fewer resources to draw from and they could also cause lack of experience and power to attract the work of God. Without the baptism of the Holy Spirit, Christ is shared as an obligation and that is likened to I "have to do it", not because you "want to do anything." When a person's life is filled with the richness of God, there is a natural flow of joy that propels a person to tell others about where the joy or blessings come from what they are made of. Whereas in the absence of the Holy Spirit there is not much anyone can say.

So, the Lighthouse Focus Group started by entrusting our hope in God and asking for His baptism of the Spirit, divine direction and knowledge to share His Word. The Lighthouse Evangelism of sharing is more than just leading someone to receive Christ as their Savior. The gospel of Christianity is more than just starting with Christ and it takes courage and strength in Christ to start and also finish strong (to finish strong is to be the best) in everything we do. Receiving Christ, therefore, is the first step but not the only answer. It is true that to win any race means putting your heart and soul into winning from the first leap to the finishing line which demands a last minute kick to get across the finish line.

Sharing the Word is not solely a Christian job it is also God's job to lead us to meet with the right people at the right time. We were responsible for building relationships that pointed people to Christ and allowed God to use those relationships to draw people to Himself. We had to be faithful in delivering God's message when He gave us the opportunity to do so and we trusted in Him with the results. I discovered that the Lighthouse Evangelism model did not require the use of any sales techniques, or a method to convince people to come to Christ but God gave us the pre-eminency to do His will. Our role as Lighthouse Focus Group was to introduce every un-churched person, who gave us an opportunity to share the Word to him/her, to introduce Christ and what He stands for, and encourage them to develop a personal relationship with Him. We devoted Tuesdays, and Friday with the non-working class and Saturday afternoons to the working class, to know these persons well and discussed spiritual concerns that directly related to people's lives. There were about five members of the Lighthouse Focus Group who were retired and they met with the unemployed and the retirees in either their homes or at the church as agreed between them.

There were provocative questions asked by the un-churched sometimes. For example, one of our members was asked, "What have you to prove that your God could provide for everyone?" She smiled without saying anything in line with the question asked, but gave references to some great men and women of the world who are Christians and successful leaders. Then she mentioned that provisions do not define a person but a good name and a good character are more worthy. By the end of their conversation the un-churched was ready to visit her church because she did not get angry but was convincing in her belief. We were trained by the H.O.P.E Network, Inc. (see footnote on

page 79) to listen carefully to others as a way to develop long-lasting and healthy personal and interpersonal relationships. Through it all we learned how to cope with individuals that we met, and listen to what they thought about the church and its people.

Discerning The Times

A lot of wisdom and quick judgment were needed to witness the Word, because not everyone that we met or that showed interest was witnessed to. The group used judgment and God-given instinct to pick the targets that were found to be ready for the Word of God, something that showed maturity and good coaching embraced by the Lighthouse Focus Group. No one was to become involved with people who showed an unwelcome attitude, or who were ready to argue before hearing what was being said. On the other hand, others came forth who enquired about what we were and some requested we pray for them or explain issues they were confronting to them in the Christian way. So the two categories of people are distinct and recognizable without any difficulty. It took people with years of experience in evangelism to understand when to make a move or accept invitation with the right people, but modern day research and experiments of evangelism have paved the way for simpler formulas to follow. All the same, I believe when you make Christ your savior and allow the Spirit of God to dwell in you, you become a qualified witness whether you feel like it or not. As we committed our relationships with the community to evangelize at all cost, the things we had seen and experienced while caring for the people became a natural part of our conversations leading to sharing of the Word of God.

Evangelism is a team effort and the Bible compares the church to a body with different parts. There were times when individuals could not be witnessed to alone. By following Jesus example, on many occasions He sent his disciples in pairs to spread the Gospel. The Word of God also requires that confession be made in public and as such, an additional person should be around when an un-churched decides to give his life to Christ. It is also a safety issue when evangelizing in dangerous areas or when walking at night. For instance when a member was about to lead someone to receive Christ, additional members of the group were called to witness the occasion if it was in a close proximity. In the absence of a Lighthouse Focus Group member, any choice of person acceptable to the new convert was called to be a witness. The Bible describes the most effective approach to sharing the word as: "Let your conversation be gracious and attractive so that you will have the right response for everyone." (Colossians 4:6). The un-churched were found to be just like any other person in the world looking for real answers. They wanted to be part of something that worked, because much of what they had seen called "Christianity" had not worked because they looked for results in the physical realm. Most of the un-churched expressed disappointment for one reason or another. One main reason some of the un-churched gave for not being interested in receiving Christ was the lifestyles of Christians they knew. Through personal contacts, some of the un-churched people have heard Christians "talk" about how God had changed us but the un-churched do not see change being demonstrated in some of our lives. The Lighthouse Focus Group had to "walk the talk" by caring for their needs and building a relationship. If Christians do not show real change in our lives, then the un-churched look at us and believe they are just as good, maybe even better than us. Why would we

want them to change and be like us? The Lighthouse Focus Group were accepted by the un-churched in most instances because we showed that we cared and we expressed a "reconciled" life by building a relationship before the sharing of the Word.

The Lighthouse Focus Group shared God's truth with the un-churched remembering always that we are God's ambassadors and we presented ourselves as though God was making His appeal through us. As ambassadors we spoke on behalf of our 'leader' Jesus Christ about His 'nation', the kingdom of God, and made appeals to anyone who was willing to hear us out when they had the opportunity to see us around. Through our involvement and relationships with the un-churched, we discovered that they are just like what we once represented as enemies to Christ, objects of wrath, dead in transgressions and sins (Ephesians 2:1-2). But just as God showed His love to us, He loves them and wants to save them. I also believe that God makes His appeal to the un-churched through Christians as channels of Grace, which includes the Lighthouse Focus Group. This meant that we were to study and know what the Bible teaches. Then as good ambassadors we had to prepare well by studying what was required of us and to understand the terms of the appeal fully. (2 Tim. 2:15)

The Lighthouse Focus Group was advised to be sensitive, patient and thoughtful in sharing the Word with the un-churched. It was extremely effective because twenty-two souls accepted Christ as their Lord and savior. The Lighthouse Focus Group was sensitive as the un-churched expressed their emotions before giving themselves to Christ. We had to allow them to vent out what bothered them in anyway they chose to, either through anger, pain or frustration due to their past experiences. We were patient in listening to what the un-churched had to say, which was not always straight to the point

type of conversations with answers, but winding around and sometimes making all kinds of accusations that had no proof or basis. In some cases the un-churched was touched by our salvation stories of how some of us became saved and how our lives had changed for better. Then they asked how they could also receive Christ.

When they accept Christ, we mentored them, like newborn babies and suggested they call us whenever they wanted to call. Having been new Christians ourselves, we knew the new converts needed lots of guidance. Therefore we continued to stay with them and be there for them even after the Lighthouse demonstration project was completed.

CHAPTER 7

LIGHTHOUSE EVANGELISM PROJECT

Strategizing a Plan for Lighthouse Evangelism

The goals (see page 13) for the demonstration project were selected based on the needs of the church and they were immediately tackled at the same meeting in July of 2006. The site team planned to create awareness among the Evangelism Team of the Church of God of East Flatbush³³ regarding the harvest of the un-churched and inactive members. The difference between the Lighthouse Evangelism and the church's evangelism team was that there was no official training for the church team before embarking on evangelism. Secondly, there were no records for how new converts came to the church and no follow-up program for the un-churched. We were to learn to love and cherish people from different cultures and religions affiliations and to build a relationship of trust with each other. On this issue we invited Dr. Grace Cornish-Livingstone,³⁴ director of H.O.P.E. Network, Inc.³⁵ to educate and train the Lighthouse Focus Group and the general church on "love languages of the church." The five languages dealt with were: Love, walking in the Spirit, building relationships with people by meeting them where they are, staying close to God as humanly possible and for

³³ The Evangelism Team of COGOEF was in place before commencement of the Lighthouse Evangelism project.

³⁴ Grace Cornish-Livingstone, founder and director of H.O.P.E. Network, Inc., is TV's popular, award-winning relationship consultant, bestselling author, and minister with Ph.D. in Social Psychology and a Masters (M.P.S.) in Urban Ministry.

³⁵ Helping Others Progress Effectively, Inc. (H.O.P.E Network, Inc.) is a non-profit, faith-based organization, which was created to develop positive training programs using practical and sound Biblical principles to help educate economically-disadvantaged youths, adults, and families as well as develop long-lasting healthy personal and inter-personal relationships.

everyone to remember when we first got saved. The H.O.P.E. Network, Inc. worked with the Lighthouse Focus Group to build in the team resiliency, understanding, courage and love--a common language that can transcend all cultures before meeting the un-churched. The awareness education and training we received from H.O.P.E. inspired the entire church. The Lighthouse Focus Group was especially pumped-up to go out and evangelize. The statement that stuck with the group was being told to go out and “develop long-lasting healthy personal and inter-personal relationships,” something that was also in the plans for Lighthouse Evangelism.

The education and training we had before launching out to evangelize, increased the knowledge of the Lighthouse Focus Group on evangelism and encouraged us to be enthusiastic in reaching out to the un-churched and inactive members without a second thought. In the end, we developed a sense of strong leadership abilities like boldness and positive attitude to confront or face whatever situation came our way. The training also gave us the knowledge that people have the same attitude and behavior whether they are Christian or not. This helped some decide on setting up a Lighthouse in their communities and neighborhoods throughout New York City. The Word of God supports training and so we were taught to, “Work hard so you can present yourself to God and receive His approval. Be a good worker, one who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly explains the word of truth.” (2 Timothy 2:15)

As part of the training and planning, we devised a weekly report form (see appendix D) for the Lighthouse Focus Group to use. The form had three categories of services as denoted by the Lighthouse Model; the prayer section, the act of caring and the act of sharing section. The form also records the activities performed including prayer

walks completed, prayer requests by people, number of people that accepted Christ and number of people that attended church service either in Church of God of East Flatbush or elsewhere due to a Lighthouse Focus Group intervention. The part of the completed form that I liked reading was the testimonial section, because this part gave me instant information or gratitude of some miracles that had taken place and it might also include someone giving his/her life to God.

For example, on one occasion, Sister Telesha Braithwaite, a member of the Lighthouse Focus Group, wrote about praying for a co-worker's son who had a rash all over his body. By the next day the child's mother called and said the rash was gone. She had before and after photographs to prove what took place. The Lighthouse project was not about healing, but it also shows that when you go about doing God's will, He blesses you in other areas as well.

It was such a humbling experience for me to join a new church and to receive such wonderful cooperation from people who were prepared to help my project succeed at all cost. One day when I was telling a few people, who had gathered to eat with me and my site team in a restaurant, how grateful I was to have come to Church of God of East Flatbush and how kindly my family and I had been received, one sister blurted out, "Well it is because you came to a position where people who are in the church for twenty-five plus years wish they should have been, so why won't the people like you." I kept quiet but in my heart I knew God did it, not man.

The selection was agreed upon by my site team as mentioned earlier, because the Lighthouse Model of evangelism is measurable by the relationships that it initiates, the reporting records requesting prayers and every ministry in the church has requested

training for the Lighthouse Evangelism. Anyone could become a Lighthouse to his or her people whether they are shy or outspoken. The majority of my site team members were already involved in evangelism in the church; that gave them the interest to be a part of a new form of evangelism. My site team and I were fascinated by the possibilities of the Lighthouse Evangelism to impact the people in the church neighborhood with the Word of God. Jesus knew the ultimate purpose of his life as the redeemer of humans and that was the motivating vision that governed his daily life. Jesus lived, died, and rose again according to His schedule. Robert E. Coleman, the author of *The Master Plan of Evangelism*, writes,

Like a general plotting his course of battle, the Son of God calculated to win. He could not afford to take a chance. Weighing every alternative and variable factor on human experience, he conceived a plan that would not fail.³⁶

The Lighthouse Focus Group took a chance, believed and trusted God to succeed based on the different evangelism model of the Lighthouse.

The church also had no option but try the Lighthouse Evangelism, because its vision is “to make disciples to impact the world”. To achieve that goal, barriers had to be crossed and new ideas tried. It meant leaving our comfort zone of dealing with relatives, a unilateral way of evangelism, and crossing over or reaching out to other people from other cultures.

The Lighthouse Focus Group embarked on the plan laid out for the evangelism and began with our first outing for the entire group to do a prayer walk in the neighborhood community of the church. The plan was to pray around two blocks to the

³⁶ Robert E. Coleman, *The Master Plan of Evangelism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Fleming H. Revell, 1993), 24

north and south of the church and a width of about a block each to the east and west (read detailed walkthrough in chapter 4 and see map on page 134).

The prayer walks opened many avenues for the act of caring all over New York City. The very first day of the prayer walks by the five groups that went out in fives, the group that prayed one block south of the church came back with big smiles on their faces. I inquired about the smiles and one of the ladies said, while prayer walking, a family saw them and asked what they were doing and they simply answered praying for the neighborhood. Right before everyone present, they requested a prayer for the family because their mother had just been sent to Kings County Hospital. The group prayed for the family on the street and promised to continue praying for them. In addition, the family gave them their home phone number to call them for the outcome of their mother's hospitalization. The group also said this gave them confidence to pray even harder believing the Lord has already answered their prayers. What I saw on the faces of these dedicated men and women, rejoicing over one simple act of praying for a family and the joy being expressed on that day, made me trust in the Lord even more for what we had begun.

The Lighthouse prayer walks encouraged the focus group to delve more into the activities in the neighborhood. Some attended basketball games in park and donated drinks to the players and their friends. Some participated in the neighborhood block parties and as people recognized them as members of the Church of God of East Flatbush, they spoke to them about the Lighthouse Evangelism. In about three weeks time, almost all the Lighthouse Focus Group members started getting calls from the areas of their Lighthouses. People called asking for prayers for their loved ones. Looking at

the neighborhood differently, than categorizing everyone as un-churched and unsaved, the Lighthouse Focus Group strolled through the area in search of any kind of help they could provide.

During the first four weeks the Lighthouse Focus Group was either prayer walking or looking for acts of kindness to perform, many opportunities opened up, like praying for people who had chronic illnesses or a newly wedded lady who was told by her gynecologist she was unable to have children, doing a simple act of taking time to greet people and inquiring after their well-being. Some gave out groceries, donated gospel CDs, visited the sick in their homes and in hospitals and invited neighbors to dinner. The Lighthouse Focus Group invited men in the church neighborhood for Church of God of East Flatbush Father's Day barbeque and a couple the men promised to stop by for fellowship and eventually made the church their home. At this juncture one of them has become a member of the church.

While caring for the needs of the people, we also cultivated friendly relationships. One sister reported after a year of living in her neighborhood she had no contacts with her apartment neighbors. But after praying for them and greeting them in the mornings she now has speaking relationship with five of her neighbors.

In all these, the negative part of our Lighthouse Evangelism was not having a common area like an incident commander center (ICC) for a disaster setup and no telephone number that anyone could call for invitation. Without these communication accessories, those the Lighthouse group evangelized could only be contacted if they left a number to call.

As mentioned previously, the group had given out prayer (business) cards for the un-churched to contact us individually (but not in ICC format) when they needed help or would like to know more about the Lighthouse project and about Jesus. So now the main focus was getting people to minister to, because we had prayed and cared for those we could reach and it was time to share the Word of God. The Lighthouse Focus Group had discussed that nothing was going to come easy and at no point of the evangelism should we use aggression to proclaim the Word of God. The only other alternative was to stay ready for a call and the opportunity to do God's will. Therefore we had to take advantage of opportunities that arose to share our faith that, "Christ is the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him." (John 14:6) We had to make the most out of the moments we had, knowing that we could not convert anyone to Christ, only the Spirit of God can. On the other hand God used individuals like the members of the focus group as channels to draw souls to himself. There was regular discussion among the Lighthouse Focus Group (See page 2) not to only proclaim the Word but to support it with our lifestyle. Only about a third of the group had had formal Bible College or Seminary training but the focus group was patient, obedient and effective. The group loves Christ and desired to serve the Lord at all cost and through that passion the Holy Spirit changed lives.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere – in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.
(Acts 1:8)

For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God sent his Son into the world not to judge the world, but to save the world through him. (John 3:16-17)

The Lighthouse Focus Group shared the Gospel of Christ with one hundred and seventy-six people in the neighborhood of the church and in different places of Lighthouses. In some places the group just shared their testimonies about how they were saved through Jesus Christ.

One Sister in the focus group met with a family of four people whose parents used to attend a Pentecostal church. She said she preached to them about the previous week's Sunday sermon on the disobedience of Jonah and how a big fish swallowed him. They quickly asked for the Church of God Sunday service schedule and promised to come back to church. The Sister had no idea what happened for the quick change of mind, neither did I, but I believed God had a hand in it. The family showed up in our 11:00 AM Sunday service two weeks after promising to visit the church. The man came with his two daughters but his teenage son was not with them at the service. He answered to the service altar call and renewed his vows to give his life to Jesus. He mentioned that the Lighthouse Evangelism brought him back to church. When church service was over a few of the Lighthouse Focus Group members gathered around them to welcome them and then I had the opportunity to question him about his sudden change. He said he had strayed from church after many years of service and rising to the level of a deacon, but two days before the Lighthouse Focus Group member witnessed to him and his family, he had heard a preacher on the radio preaching a similar sermon from the book of Jonah. The preacher said 'disobedience to God will end you in the Sea or in Hell' and he felt within him that God was talking to him and the Sister's repetition was a confirmation to what God was saying to him. He also asked us to pray for his family especially his teenage son, who had joined bad friends. This was proof that we could disseminate the

Word and it is just like sowing a seed for God to bless it to germinate and bear fruit; when or how this will come about is not in any man's hands but the Lord's.

The Word was not always shared from the Bible because some of the people were in hurry for work, school or whatever call they had to attend to, but when the stories of the Bible were recounted just like testimonies, people were moved.

But Moses pleaded with the Lord, 'O Lord, I am not very good with words. I never have been, and I'm not now, even though you have spoken to me. I get tongue-tied, and my words get tangled.' Then the Lord asked Moses, 'Who makes a person's mouth? Who decides whether people speak or do not speak, hear or do not hear, see or do not see? Is it not I the Lord? Now go! I will be with you as you speak, and I will instruct you in what to say.' (Exodus 4:10-12)

Every Wednesday, between the hours of 7 and 8 in the evening, the Lighthouse Focus Group met to give an account of what was going on out there in the church community and individual Lighthouse areas (see footnote on page 65). One of our aims was to encourage each other before anyone got discouraged and decided to quit what we had started. From the outside, it looks so peaceful when someone talks about the success of sharing the Word with people. Like any other work, you have to try hard and know what to say and when to say it. To be effective, it takes the Spirit of God to provide the right words at the right time. Therefore at our weekly meetings we discussed successes and failures. Thanks be to God, the successful stories out-weighed the failures, which was encouraging to those who felt they failed. Usually the success stories described how a Lighthouse Focus Group member was able to speak to someone about Jesus and how the person responded positively. Sometimes someone gave his/her life to Christ or someone got healed instantly. On the other hand, a focus group member may have combed the entire Lighthouse community or area the whole week and found no one to

help or share the Word with. At the same time, no calls were received from people they thought they had already built relationships with. In such times we united in optimism that all was well with everyone we know and no one needed help.

While dealing with all these issues, there were some members among the Lighthouse Focus Group who were still terrified to go out and share the Word alone. Not because they could not talk, or because they were scared to walk in the neighborhood by themselves, but they were afraid of the kind of questions they would have to answer. In a way these members were not confident evangelizing by themselves, so someone had to be available to walk with them even when they received personal call that requested an individual visitation. The rest of the Lighthouse Focus Group continued to encourage and support these members by making sure they evangelized with one other person at all times. They were also reminded that Jesus sent his disciples in pairs to evangelize and it is all right to do the same. Another suggestion we gave our members was that they could begin their conversations with the un-churched by telling their salvation stories or dealing with subjects they were good at and then proceed to talk about Jesus when it suits the purpose.

At a Wednesday meeting one Brother asked for prayers for courage to share the Word. He said he could do all things for people, care for them and talk with them but when it comes to sharing his faith with them it became difficult. He said he had brought meals to the poor, mown neighbor's lawns and visited them in the hospitals but the mere fact of telling them about Jesus terrified him. George Barna, raises this question,

Have you ever doubted that God really has the ability to change the heart of a particular person? You wouldn't be alone if you harbored such a

concern. But the evidence shows God's amazing ability to melt the hearts of even the most coldhearted people.³⁷

We prayed for this Brother for about a week after the commencement of Lighthouse prayer walk and then he walked in one day and said, "I did it" with a broad smile of joy on his face. The Focus Group rejoiced with him and told him not to ever give up again. Now, he is one of the best evangelizer's in the church and can be called on 24/7 to minister to any need.

Another Sister with the Lighthouse Focus Group told her story of how she had a difficult landlord who would not look at her when she greeted her because of complaints she made against her for refusing to fix broken household things on time. Then she joined the Lighthouse Focus Group and took a bold step to talk to her landlord about Jesus. The next time they met in front of the house she invited the landlord to church and the landlord obliged. The landlord has not showed up yet, but we are waiting for her arrival one day.

³⁷ George Barna, *Evangelism that Works*, 147.

CHAPTER 8

OUTCOMES AND EVALUATIONS

Project Outcome

There were innumerable hours of work invested into the Lighthouse Evangelism project and every second spent was worthwhile. The project has enlightened Church of God of East Flatbush and bridged the gap between the church and its community. The people of the community are now aware of some of the things that take place in the four walls of the Church of God of East Flatbush. With time, I believe some more people from the community are going to join the church because they kept asking about it and some promised to visit us. The program was so successful that the Christian brothers and sisters of the Church of God of East Flatbush are constantly asking how they can be a part of the Lighthouse Evangelism. The overall outcome of the Lighthouse Evangelism project is as follows:

The Lighthouse Focus Group distributed one hundred and eighteen business cards in various areas of the Lighthouses, and gave out ninety contact cards. There were one hundred and sixty-three prayer walks conducted, and three hundred and eleven prayer requests received by the Lighthouse Focus Group. Twenty-two individuals gave their lives to Christ and thirty-nine people attended a church service at Church of God of East Flatbush. One individual decided to attend church services by his house. Overall fifteen people got healed from various kinds of sicknesses and pain and eleven from emotional distresses. Out of the eleven with emotional distresses, two were brought about by death of loved ones. Four people acquired jobs and they called to thank individual Lighthouse

Focus Group members who had taken the time to pray for them. Six spiritual attacks through dreams and one in the form of hallucination were cured through prayers and four social problems resolved.

The outcome of the Lighthouse Evangelism project was a success in the sense that apart from the number of things that we positively achieved, every day of our involvement with the community and the un-churched was a learning experience for evangelism implementation. The Lighthouse Focus Group and the site team learned how great it was to fellowship together in the field and to put to use the biblical knowledge acquired in the church.

Lighthouse for the un-churched did not consist merely for the interest we had in the salvation of souls and the growth of our church. Lighthouse Evangelism for the un-churched rested first of all upon the recognition that the people we were out to meet were humans, like ourselves, creatures created in the image of God. We, therefore, had interest in them in the whole range of their being, body, spirit and soul, their relations, their interests, and their activities. Too often the work of evangelism had been frustrated and brought into reproach because the messengers of the gospel had shown little interest in, or sympathy with, the everyday troubles and joys, cares and interests of those to whom Christians minister. Lighthouse Evangelism followed the example of Jesus, the Savior who identified Himself with the interests of all people in the whole range of life and activity. Furthermore, the Lighthouse Focus Group appreciated the fact that the Word of God bore upon all of life and our love and interest could not be less extensive than the application of the Word of God itself. We acted like messengers of the gospel and established contacts and confidence in the ordinary relations of life, and as we placed

the un-churched in the most favorable position it brought a supreme blessing of the gospel to everyone.

There was also the temptation that our interest in the un-churched, and our admiration of the many noble qualities they exhibited and of the noble services they performed, would blind us to the reality of their alienation from God and of their enmity against Him. Nevertheless, the love for them prevailed in appreciation of their deepest need and in the determination to confront them with the truth and claims of the gospel of Christ.

The framework of this project increased the congregation's knowledge and understanding of a theology of evangelism, that the leadership required to execute a program of evangelism, and strategies for implementing a program for evangelism. In order to address the frequently inadequate and passive programs of evangelism within the local church of God of East Flatbush, this study was developed, implemented, tested in several neighborhoods, and evaluated with written records for future reference to be used in the context of Lighthouse Evangelism for training and equipping the church evangelism team in theology, leadership and strategies for evangelism. The records and outcomes of the Lighthouse Evangelism project was reviewed by the administrative staff and leaders of the Christian Education classes of the Church of God of East Flatbush and found to be suitable for the congregation and the members for evangelism. The Lighthouse Evangelism is now an official required training course for every ministry in the Church of God of East Flatbush declared by the Bishop (Senior Pastor of the Church) and his pastoral staff.

The Lighthouse project has also become significant because it exposed the inadequate theology of evangelism used by the Church of God of East Flatbush in the past, and it sets forth a theology of evangelism based on New Testament type of evangelism that Jesus showed. In other words, apart from the Lord mingling with all people, He also brought His Light as a Lighthouse to them. By this special Lighthouse of Jesus, people were drawn into the Kingdom of God. This project set forth some characteristics of leadership necessary to carry on a productive ministry in evangelism, because individuals of the Lighthouse Focus Group who could not evangelize, preach or teach the Word were emboldened and built up with confidence to express themselves as leaders. This project has also enlightened and furnished most of the people who participated in it with better comprehension of relevant strategies for evangelism through the Lighthouse Model of praying, caring and sharing when the opportunity presented itself. The group learned that the Lighthouse Evangelism is easier and simpler than other evangelism models (as discussed in chapter 2) for everyone to become an evangelist and get results.

Although we have been admonished by the Word of God to go forth and evangelize, it was confirmed through our project that evangelism is to be considered to be a primary task and the number one responsibility of the church. Meaning every department of the Church of God of East Flatbush has to learn from the Lighthouse Evangelism project and obey the “Great Commission” to go out and evangelize for the Kingdom of God.

Since the Lighthouse Evangelism had no money earmarked for the project, we addressed the task of making evangelism effective with minimal monetary budget. The

Lighthouse project was accomplished with limited monetary expenditures because most of our cards and forms for distribution were designed by the site team and printed by the administration of our church. Individual members of the Lighthouse Focus Group volunteered and sponsored the caring activities by providing free food and other donations to the neighborhood by themselves.

The Lighthouse Focus Group observed the ability of the gospel, when presented in a relevant community and in a friendly way, could effect transformation in the lives of the un-churched who misunderstand the nature of God. This was proven by the relationship that the Lighthouse Focus Group formed with the people they met in the church community and in their neighborhoods. As the gospel was made relevant to their understanding and brought to them in their convenience and in an amicable way, it was often accepted without a struggle. The Lighthouse Evangelism proved that highly secularized people can be reached for God when the gospel is preached in relevant forms with practical life application and according to biblical understanding.

This demonstration project utilized a congregational questionnaire (see Appendix AA) to measure the effectiveness, and theological understanding of the un-churched. Another measurement of the program targeted a smaller group systematically selected from the church membership roll, from which we evaluated four of the souls won by the Lighthouse Evangelism project to ascertain if the type of Lighthouse Model used represented the gospel to the un-churched and provided a corrective for misunderstanding of the call to evangelism. The survey showed that all those who gave their lives to Christ were pleased with the ties they had with the Lighthouse Focus Group members and their non-aggressive personality of waiting so long before sharing the Word of God with them.

One person said waiting too long to share the Word was not good because he wanted to know about preaching in the COGOEF. He also said he was ready the first day he met the Lighthouse Focus Group member to give up to Christ, but no one said anything and he stayed quiet until two weeks after he was asked. However the overall response from the un-churched was that they were knowledgeable of what goes on in the church and they needed the peaceful approach to respond to what Christians ask them.

For a period of about five years from 1995 to 2003, the Church of God of East Flatbush experienced a stagnation of new converts. As explained earlier in this writing, the Church of God of East Flatbush practiced Family Evangelism, in which one family member shared the gospel with another family member and in the cause of that won the unsaved family members. One of the disadvantages was that fewer souls were converted and they were limited to the same culture instead of evangelizing multi-culturally. Fewer souls were won because the ratio of evangelizing families of a congregation, as compared to reaching out to various nationalities, is very small and limited. The chances of winning from a bigger field with all ethnicities are better than individuals looking in their homes or waiting for souls to be ready. In a wider spectrum, you can always move on to other people when someone is not ready or refuses to listen because you have a broader choice. The Lighthouse Evangelism reached out to as many cultures as possible and it successfully won six people from different nationalities to the church. There was a substantial increase in the post-Lighthouse Evangelism water baptism in the church. Fifty-three people were baptized and they were accepted as members of the church. It was an increase of about forty percent from the average baptism and membership class of previous three years.

The Lighthouse project has strengthened and expanded evangelism in the church with more members trying to reach out to their neighbors in their communities. There is a new feel for winning souls in the church. This euphoria could be likened to a home town team winning a football championship, then every child in town begins to play football whether it is snowing or raining they go out to play. There is an increase of effectiveness for evangelism outreach efforts that has touched most members of our congregation. The new strategy for loving our community for Christ has sprung up and the Lighthouse Focus Group members are now the leaders who have the expertise and experience in the prayer-walk, caring and sharing experiences of the new evangelism outbreak. The Lighthouse Focus Group now serves as the connection point for resources that will help the community because they have the practical experience and communication contacts with many people in the neighborhood. For now, the Lighthouse project's breakthrough is a *hot topic* with every ministry within the church sounding its praises and requesting training for their members. The success of the Lighthouse Evangelism could be long term, if the evangelism team of the church designs a long-term plan to consolidate the Lighthouse Focus Group with its members. Such a plan will open up the communication channel for the combined evangelism team to learn the practical experiences of combining the church neighborhood together. The practical steps being taken by the church are for the congregation and individual ministries to collaborate in Lighthouse Evangelism throughout the church community.

The goal stipulated by the Lighthouse site team to raise the awareness of the Church of God of East Flatbush regarding the harvest of the un-churched and inactive members of the church was successful. The team was able to implement all three

strategies during our four training sections. There was a psychological training given by Dr. Grace Cornish-Livingstone and her H.O.P.E. Network, Inc. (See chapter 7) to proliferate understanding of human behavior to the Lighthouse Focus Group. A couple of noted urban-based churches were visited to learn from their evangelism approach for winning souls but they had embraced different strategies. Still, there was relationship formed between the Lighthouse Evangelism team of Church of God of East Flatbush and the two churches I visited. I can foresee a future connection to do a religious event together with these two churches.

Two of our site team members got together and wrote an (see Appendix F) evaluation of our training sessions and their report proved that the Lighthouse project training was superb, far beyond the expectation of the Lighthouse Focus Group and the entire church. The training sections had three and half times more people than anticipated and selected twenty people to start the Lighthouse Focus Group. In the end we had to select based on questionnaire (see Appendix AA for Form and Format). It is a common complaint that people are reluctant to volunteer for projects without incentives, but we were blessed with too many volunteers to choose from. The information given in the training sessions helped those who were reluctant to evangelize to be comfortable with their new roles as Lighthouse Focus Group members. Some claimed this was easier than the old system of evangelism in the church, when they followed people around with tracts, which some people received and dumped them on the floor right before them.

The Lighthouse Focus Group was also trained to increase their knowledge of the Lighthouse strategy to ensure full implementation. That is understanding and the application of the Lighthouse strategy for prayer walks, caring and sharing the Word of

God. One of the strategies used to enhance this goal was the presentation of a video to confirm and explain how this type of evangelism is done. The video was a real life experience of regular people with diverse backgrounds walking and doing what the Lighthouse calls for. A complete formal training on the Lighthouse Model of Evangelism was shown and weekly sessions of discussions were held to explain to people who misunderstood the format to learn, and together the work was done. Through observation of the video presentations, the site team was able to assist people who did not understand what was going on. In the end every Lighthouse focus member evangelized by following the 3 steps (Praying, Caring and Sharing) for his or her neighborhood of Lighthouse, proving that the strategies learned from the training were a success. The Lighthouse Model was successfully used to reach the un-churched and we restored fellowship with five of our inactive members.

One of the inactive was a man who decided to come back after he was ministered to by one of the Lighthouse Focus Group member. I will call this man Mr. X. He stated that he grew up in the Church of God of East Flatbush and was active until about five years ago when his mother passed away. He sounded very bitter because he said things became very difficult for him and at the same time everybody deserted him. He harbored his bitterness within him. Then one bright summer day in July 2007 he met a Lighthouse Focus Group member who told him about her church and he said, "That used to be my church too." He mentioned two former pastors of the church to her. She quickly said, "We have a new pastor who is opened to discussion and very caring of his people." Therefore within a week of the encounter he gathered momentum and came to Church of God of East Flatbush to see for himself who this new pastor was and has not left the

church since. He claimed that the humble conversation with the lady from the Lighthouse Focus Group paved the way for him to come back and he would like to help someone in return.

There are about twenty-two people who gave their lives to Christ during the Lighthouse Evangelism project who are in the mentoring program of the Church, which was enhanced by this project. Four of our elders in the Church of God of East Flatbush were selected by the demonstration project site team members with the help of the senior pastor of the Church to mentor new converts that would join the church after the Lighthouse Evangelism. These were men and women with experience in the Church of God doctrines, ministry and evangelism. They were two pastors, a minister and a director of intercessory ministry for the Church. These mentors were also trained at the pre-Lighthouse Evangelism workshops to concentrate on Lighthouse Evangelism with the demonstration project in mind.

The mentees are being mentored for six months or longer based on individual rate of growth. Mentoring comprised of biblical studies, which included topics on, the Holy Spirit, prayer, love, how to be a good steward, and sharing the gospel with the Lighthouse Model. The mandate was clear and biblical, “study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needs not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.” The mentees are being trained to have daily devotion in their homes or wherever feasible at a chosen time of the day. To enforce the mentees to pray daily, there is a consideration of keeping a prayer journal. In addition to prayer, they are being taught or introduced to fasting as another spiritual discipline. This will be implemented at a gradual pace until each individual develops confidence to fast by themselves.

In the initial stages the mentors were asked to build a relationship between themselves and their mentees and then proceed to introduce a four-fold process of the mentorship to them. These are to get the mentee to commit to being a partner in the relationship and hold him or her accountable. If at anytime the mentor felt that the mentee was uncooperative to try to resolve the situation or inform the Evangelism director. Each month, the mentor provides the Lighthouse Evangelism department with a brief report of the mentor/mentee relationship for assessment purposes. At the end of the process the relationship between the mentor/mentee is expected to rival the biblical relationship between Moses and Joshua, or Naomi and Ruth.

Most of them have been baptized and are taking their mentoring lessons seriously. I have observed some of the mentees in various ministries in our Sunday school classes. This is evidence that they have discovered ministries that they can affiliate with and it will eventually help them grow. The mentorship of the Church is a long-term process, which is ongoing whereby the new converts are giving a chance to grow at their natural pace.

The overall evaluation was based on the strength, growth and further development of the Lighthouse ministry. In conclusion, we achieved our goals and the Pastoral Board of the Church of God of East Flatbush has officially adopted the Lighthouse Model of evangelism for all evangelism activities of the church.

Ministerial Competencies

The site team convened in Dayspring Glory Ministry sanctuary for a dialogue on the ministerial competencies on Reverend Edward A. Nyarko on Thursday, February 5, 2006. As usual a member of the site team prayed and committed the meeting into the hands of God. I explained to the group about the requirements concerning my ministerial competencies. The team was asked to assess me without holding back anything they wanted to say, because it was for this reason that I chose them. Then I left the room for an elder of the church who was also my site team member to chair the meeting. He had to do the transcribing of the discussions that transpired throughout the meeting and to turn in the written document. Two more meetings were held amongst the team before the final result package of the assessment was presented to me.

I read through the competency assessment evaluation about me, by my site team and I found it very interesting. The site team found most of my work outstanding and therefore concluded by asking me to continue what I had been doing. There was no area of gross incompetence but they stressed continuation of growth and additional improvement as a pastor and ecumenist. I believed the assessment was very fair because there is a saying in the Twi dialect of Ghana that states “the marksman does not know when he is walking or treading on a crooked line.” Literally meaning, “two heads are better than one.”

My competency assessment was conducted before I joined my present church, and I continued to pursue the necessary goals to improve on the two areas of a Pastor and an Ecumenist. As a Pastor all of the six site team members of my previous church

evaluated me with a highly satisfactory performance but their comments made me evaluate this position. Comments like, I should start cherishing and nurturing long-time members and start to develop a way to make contact with inactive members of the church. These were true comments because I had been very busy as a fulltime worker plus church activities and fallen short as an associate pastor to make contacts with as many people as I should have. On the other hand, in a well-organized Church as the church of God of East Flatbush most of these contact calls and are conducted by the secretary and the hospitality group of the church.

Self-Evaluation after One Year

As Pastor: According to Richard M. Gula, pastors "...may be highly skilled as preachers, teachers, or administrators, but we can still fall short of being virtuous by not making ourselves accessible to people."³⁸ Accessibility to my church people was the exact thing my site team wanted me to develop as their pastor. Therefore as a pastor I was to provide true leadership in all dimensions of ministry activity, including shepherding. I believe I have improved in this model of pastoral ministry tremendously. My outreach to the active and inactive members of the Church of God of East Flatbush has increased through the Lighthouse Evangelism project and it has opened a dialogue of communication with a lot more people.

The first task we conducted before the Lighthouse Evangelism began was by seeking out former members (inactive) of the Church of God of East Flatbush to know the cause of their absenteeism (See page 39). The Lighthouse Evangelism project also led us to people who were ill and indisposed in their homes and in the hospital. But

³⁸ Richard M. Gula, *Ethics In Pastoral Ministry* (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1996), 60.

through families and friends we were welcomed into these homes of the sick and we prayed for them and encouraged them and above all I have personally stayed in touch with a lot of these people.

The more people that the focus group met the more I cherished their relationships. In addition, those who became a part of the church were nurtured to increase in faith and we also introduced them to the Lighthouse Evangelism activities. In retrospect, the overall review of my reaching out to the inactive members of my congregation has improved and I have learned to communicate better with people's needs. In addition, I have matured as a pastor in my approach of caring for the congregation and shepherding them. I do all these by showing more love and making regular contacts to the absentees much more often than before. I was able to measure my improvement and growth in this area by the number of inactive and active members who approached me after the Lighthouse project to congratulate me and through their testimonies about what had brought them back to church. Before the project, hardly did anyone come to me and talk about how well I was doing by reaching out to them, but now many people are talking about how the Lighthouse project has opened a contact for them to come back to the church. Many more people are still reporting to me now than before and they express their gratitude to me and the Lighthouse Focus Group for reaching out to them, but in response, we give glory to God.

As an Ecumenist: "Ecumenical" comes from the Greek word meaning the entire inhabited world. Therefore to be an Ecumenist I am supposed to minister effectively in a global context and to engage in activities that will promote peace and the well-being of people in New York City and beyond. Two of my former site team members

recommended a continuous growth as an ecumenist in order to develop my ability to provide structured opportunities for interdenominational or interfaith worship, education and action. In the past year, the Church of God of East Flatbush has had two bilingual interdenominational services, conducted with a Spanish congregation church from the Bronx and a Haitian church from Brooklyn. These were organized through the missions department of the church of which I am the director. The bilingual services were well received, that Church of God of East Flatbush would like to reciprocate by attending similar services in the premises of these churches. Based on my personal participation in the Lighthouse Evangelism and the interdenominational services of other ethnicities, I saw myself doing more global outreach of the gospel to different cultures right here in New York City. I have acquired more knowledge in these interactions and matured from them. Therefore, from the perspective of ecumenism and pastoral care I have increased in the knowledge of diverse cultural evangelism.

Competencies Candidate Seeks to Improve

On a personal note, I discovered that I had wasted a lot of time waiting to be trained and to try and master the trade of a pastor, but unfortunately it is not all about knowledge. I should have paid attention to my heart and not what people said because it is God that equips us to do His will and not man. The popular saying is, *knowledge is power* but it is not everything. I believe knowledge helps on a level to promote the Word of God but it does not impact wisdom. While evangelizing with the Lighthouse Focus Group I observed some of the Lighthouse Focus Group members that had never been to any seminary and without any college education doing as well or better than their more

educated colleagues. Why better? Because the un-churched listened to them just as they would listen to anyone else and sometimes they tackled issues with ease more than the well educated and the young ones in school.

In the beginning, we made an effort to understand the needs of the people in the church's neighborhood, their beliefs, customs and social patterns or culture as a whole before the presentation of the Lighthouse Evangelism methods, which in a way taught me how to deal with people without stereotyping. I remember having a similar thought in June 1999 when I accepted an appointment as an Industrial Hygienist at Harlem Hospital Center. Even though I am a black sub-Saharan African, I was very skeptical of the black community that I was going to work in, in Harlem. It was so because my mind had been polluted and saturated with bad things like killings of black on black. I pushed myself to try and also trust in my God to see me through on daily basis. Then, one day I said to myself after three weeks of observing the neighborhood and the people that there is no place like Harlem, because the people are friendly and very nice to each other. I realized that this saying was true and it is one of the few places left in New York City that people unknown to each other can greet each other and respond in kind. I saw the love that the working class blacks showed to each other. Since then, I fell in love with the community of Harlem especially the neighborhood around 135th street on Lenox Avenue.

Scripture (Matthew 28:19-20) makes it clear that we are to make disciples, not just decisions. Therefore, it should be the aim of Christians to give equal value to all people and then allow them to decide for their conversion. It is no more about my church being the only right church but sowing the Word of God in people's lives and waiting for God to draw the souls to Himself. As we learned through the Lighthouse Evangelism, it

takes patience and endurance to wait and see what the Lord will do when someone is at the point of death and you intercede by praying for God's miraculous healing while at the same time you are proclaiming the word to the same person by faith. Such patience and waiting times, for God to move and save a life or stop a wicked act, brought maturity to me and my Lighthouse Focus Group.

I watched new members being nurtured by the leaders of the church and observed them as they walked into our church pool of water for baptism I wondered what they were thinking? Have we given them the right answers to their needs? The answer is "Yes" because God is able to do all things above and beyond our imagination. When questions are asked about when and how God is going to answer people's needs and how these answers would be detected I could not give specific answers like I would give to a science question. The God of the universe is awesome. He is Spirit and they that worship Him should worship Him in spirit and in truth. It is by His grace, favor and mercy that we encountered minimal opposition for the Lighthouse project.

There is adequate proof that the Lighthouse Evangelism has found a place in the Church of God of East Flatbush; it has impacted the East Flatbush community to bring about change. There are many people outside of the church who are waiting for the right and sincere people to impact their world. They do not need people who wear their positions on their dress sleeves, flash their degrees as badges or speak languages that only the intellectuals can understand. They look for humility and equal partnership to walk together and laugh together. All these qualities could be found in one man and that is Jesus. The only "Son of Man" that we should emulate is Jesus Christ.

APPENDICES³⁹

³⁹ All forms, cards and questionnaires were created by the Lighthouse Evangelism Team of COGOEF 2007-2008

APPENDIX A
TRAINING MATERIALS

Lighthouse Training
Video: “Light Your World”

*In traditional Evangelism, we talk to people about God.
In the Lighthouse prayer, we talk to God about people.*

1. **What is a Lighthouse?** A Lighthouse is a _____,
_____ or _____ committed to _____ for,
_____ for and _____ Jesus Christ with those in their circle of influence,
especially those who do not know Him.

2. **Who can be a Lighthouse?**

3. **Why should I be a Lighthouse?** Because we are:

- a. Commanded to

- b. Commanded to

- c. Commanded to

4. **Why do Lighthouses work?**

- a. when we pray

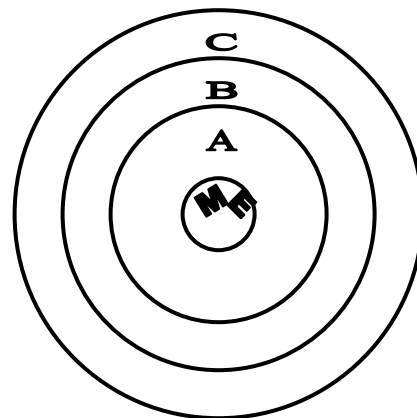
- b. when we care God’s love

- c. The Gospel works

5. **Whom should I reach out to?**

A _____

B _____



C _____

6. How should I pray?

B - _____
L - _____
E - _____
S - _____
S - _____

7. How do I get started?

a. Confession

b. _____
Commitment

5 _____ 5 _____ 5 _____ 5 _____ 5 _____
c. Connecting

8. **How should I care?** Start by building relationships. Be ready to do acts of kindness.

For example: _____

9. **How should I share?** In order to be saved people must somehow “hear” the good news (Romans 10:14). Be ready to tell your story, give a tract, video, or an invitation to a church service.

10. How can I increase my effectiveness?

a. Be _____ and _____ in prayer.

b. Take the time to _____ the people you are praying for.

c. Be _____ in some way to share the Gospel.

11. **What if I don’t see results?** Don’t bank on quick results, take a long term view. Pray in faith. **Things happen when we pray that don’t happen when we don’t pray.**

12. What can I expect over time?

You will be _____

You will have _____ you didn’t expect.

There will be changes in your _____

My Prayer List

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____

Evangelism Selection Survey <u>DATE:</u> / / 07		
1. What type of evangelism do you engage in most often? (Circle all that apply.)		
Street	Tracts	Subway/bus
Lifestyle	Phone	Prayer
Altar	Nursing Home/Hospital	
None	Other	
2. How often do you evangelize? (Circle one)		
Every day	1-2 times per week	
Monthly	Never	
	Other	
3. Whom do you target for your evangelistic efforts? (Circle all that apply.)		
Family	Friends	
Co-Workers	Other	
4. Do you feel that your strategy of evangelism is effective? Yes No Sometimes		
5. How do you evaluate your effectiveness? What method or methods do you use?		
6. Are you still in contact with any of those you have evangelized? Yes No		
a. If yes , are any of them:		
members of this church?	Yes	No
members of another church?	Yes	No
7. On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least and 5 being most), how open are you to trying a new way of evangelizing?		
1	2	3 4 5
8. As you observe others evangelizing, on a scale of 1-5 (1 being least and 5 being most), how do you rate their overall sensitivity to those to whom they are witnessing?		
1	2	3 4 5
9. Are you familiar with the Lighthouse Method of evangelism? Yes No		
If yes, how did you learn about it?		
10. Would you be willing to participate in a Focus Group Study on Evangelism in order to strengthen the Evangelism Ministry of the Church of God of East Flatbush? Yes No		
If yes , please write your name and phone number on this survey and someone will contact you.		
Completed by:	Male <input type="checkbox"/>	Female <input type="checkbox"/>

Start by saying yes to God. Pray a commitment prayer like this:

"God, I know that my neighbors matter very much to you and that you have commanded me to make 'requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving' for them. So, out of obedience to you and out of love for my neighbors, I commit myself to ask for your blessings for them for five minutes a day, five days a week, for the next five weeks. I'll do this, with your help, to the best of my ability. In Jesus' name, Amen."

Persons I will pray for:

Persons I will *pray* with:

My five week commitment . . .

begins the week of _____
ends the week of _____

My impressions as I prayed:

Write your name below to commit to pray for your neighbors. Return this commitment slip to your church office.

Yes! I/we will pray for God's blessings for
my/our neighbors for five minutes a day, five
days a week, for five weeks.

Name: _____

[illegible]

The following resources are available from
Houses of Prayer Everywhere

- Make Your Home a Power House
- How Do I Pray for My Neighbors?
- Pocket Prayer Journal
- Houses of Prayer decal, poster, or flag
- Power House—a monthly newsletter
- Prayer greeting cards
- Doorhangers

To order these and many other Houses of Prayer resources (Discounts available on quantity orders):

P.O. Box 141312
Grand Rapids, MI, 49514
1-800-217-5200
info@hopeministries.org
www.hopeministries.org

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Five, Blessings
Asimple.

A simple,
friendly way to
touch the lives of family, friends,
and neighbors by praying...

Five Blessings

for

Five Neighbors

for

Five Minutes

a day,

Five Days

a week, for

Five Weeks



*Used by permission.

APPENDIX AA

SURVEY FORMS & RESULTS

Survey On People's Involvement In Church

DATE: / / 07

1. Do you live in The Church of God of East Flatbush Neighborhood? (Circle all that apply.)

Yes

No

If No, where do you reside? In Brooklyn _____ Other _____

2. Are you a Christian and affiliated to a Home Church? Yes _____ No _____

If Yes, How often do you attend church service? _____

If No, Have you ever thought of becoming a Christian? _____

3. Are you employed? (Circle all that apply.) Yes _____ No _____

If Yes, How long have you been in your present job? _____

4. Is your job affecting your church attendance? **Yes** _____ **No** _____ **Sometimes** _____

5. If you checked **Yes** for question 4, what day of the week would you prefer to attend church

Service? Sun Mon Tue Wed Thurs Fri Sat

6. Do you reside with your family? **Yes** _____ **No** _____

a. **If yes**, is your family the cause of your inactivity to your church?

7. On a scale of 1-5 (1 being least and 5 being most), Do you know what the church represent?

1 2 3 4 5

8. Would you want your children to be a part of a church?

1 2 3 4 5

9. If you were a member of the Church of God of East Flatbush what made you leave?

Write a brief reason for your departure from COGOEF _____

10. What changes in the church would attract you to come back? _____

Evangelism Survey Results**DATE: 2 / 23 / 07****1. What type of evangelism do you engage in most often?**

	<u>Male (32)</u>	<u>Female (60)</u>	<u>Total (92)</u>
Street	10	6	16
Tracts	8	8	16
Subway/bus	2	7	9
Lifestyle	8	24	32
Phone	5	23	28
Prayer	9	32	41
Altar	4	9	13
Nursing Home/Hospital	5	10	15
None	5	0	5
Other: Talking to Friends	1	0	1
Giving music CD's	0	1	1
At work	0	1	1

2. How often do you evangelize?

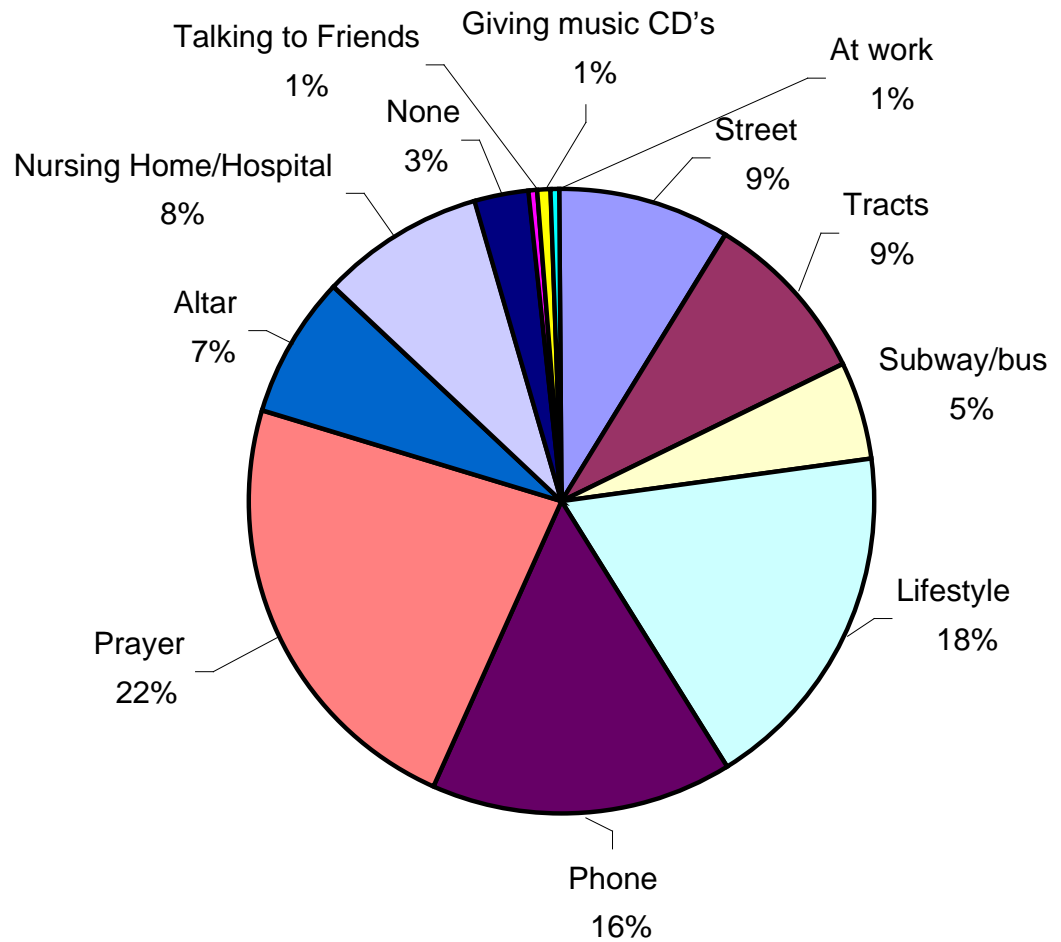
Every day	8	17	25
1-2 times per week	6	19	25
Monthly	9	7	16
Never	4	4	8
Other: Occasional	4	13	17

3. Whom do you target for your evangelistic efforts?

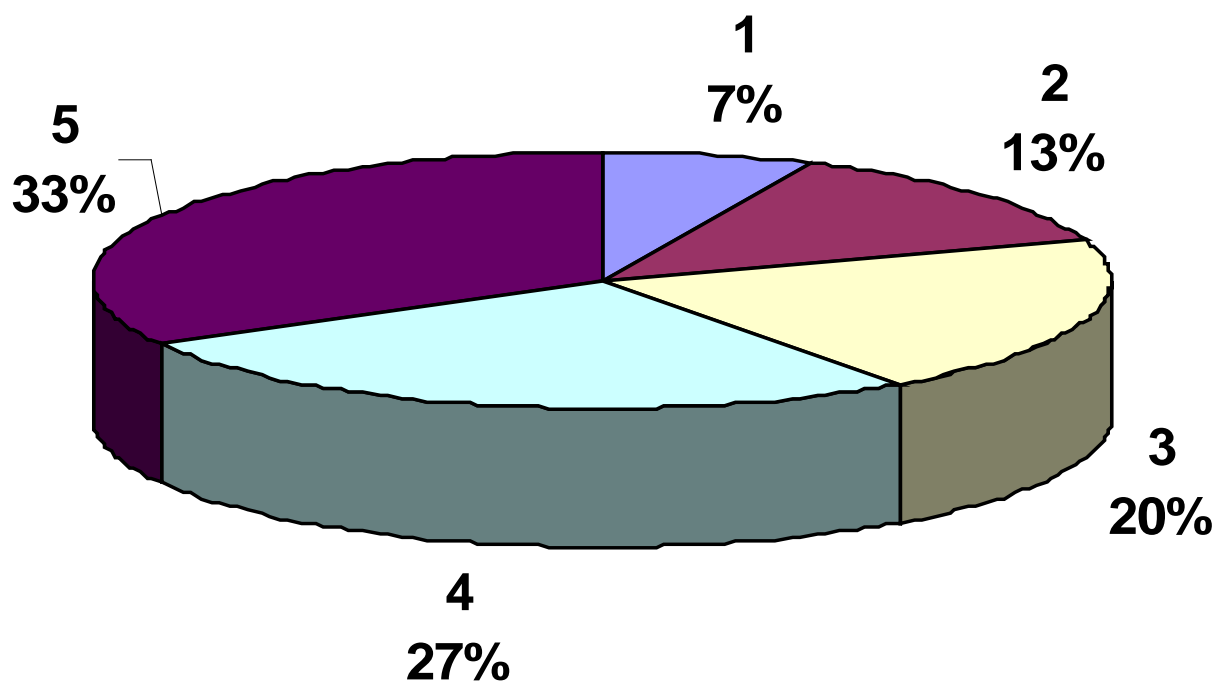
Family	11	35	46
Friends	19	37	56
Co-Workers	11	27	38
Other: Chance encounters	4	6	10
Community	2	0	2
Patients	0	1	1

4. Do you feel that your strategy of evangelism is effective?			
Yes	16	21	37
No	2	5	7
Sometimes	12	32	44
	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	<u>Total</u>
5. How do you evaluate your effectiveness?			
Number of converts	2	16	18
Relationships developed	0	3	3
Number of people who listen	1	0	1
Inward peace	1	0	1
No method in place	27	31	58
Change in their lifestyle	1	1	2
6. Are you still in contact with any of those you have evangelized?			
Yes	22	45	67
No	7	7	14
a. Are any of them members of this church?			
Yes	11	21	32
No	18	29	47
b. Are any of them members of another church?			
Yes	14	23	37
No	10	17	27
7. On a scale of 1-5, how open are you to trying a new way of evangelizing?			
1	2	3	5
2	5	5	10
3	8	8	16
4	4	13	17
5	12	30	42
8. As you observe others evangelizing, on a scale of 1-5, how do you rate their overall sensitivity to those to whom they are witnessing?			
1	1	1	2
2	4	6	10
3	4	20	24
4	10	12	22
5	6	11	17
9. Are you familiar with the Lighthouse Method of evangelism?			
Yes	12	37	49
No	18	21	39
If yes, how did you learn about it?			
Church	6	34	40
10. Would you be willing to participate in a Focus Group Study on Evangelism in order to strengthen the Evangelism Ministry of the Church of God of East Flatbush?			
Yes	21	43	64
No	6	14	20

1. What type of evangelism do you engage in most often?



**On a scale of 1-5, how open are you to trying a new way of evangelizing?
(5 = most open)**



Lighthouse of Prayer Report Sheet

Number of Lighthouses reporting: 14

Lighthouse Locations:

Home: 11

Work: 10

School:

Other (specify): Hospital 1

Zip Codes of Lighthouses: 11203, 11207, 11212, 10306, 11233, 11236, 11234, 10473, and 11226

Number of people prayed for: 541

2000 (Bro. Henry gave this number. He wrote that he prayed for the People of Africa, Iraq & Jamaica)

Acts of Caring:

Number: 206

Specific acts of caring done:

- ❖ bought groceries
- ❖ visited the sick
- ❖ took care of physical needs of someone who was disabled
- ❖ encouraging phone call
- ❖ waited 5 hours at the Police Station, central booking, for an avowed atheist to be released
- ❖ helped to find a roommate for a friend
- ❖ cut neighbors grass
- ❖ invited someone to lunch
- ❖ visited neighbor whose mother is in hospital and shared Gospel and words of encouragement
- ❖ Gave out 21 copies of a Gospel CD (Sis. T. Braithwaite)
- ❖ called 2 sick co-workers – one with terminal cancer and one with pneumonia
- ❖ gave information about a play to co-worker having difficulties in her marriage
- ❖ handed out employment applications for Dept. of Sanitation and pamphlets for a Saturday children's program
- ❖ interceded for a co-worker regarding a trip request
- ❖ included a co-worker in a training program

- ❖ visited a neighbor after a fire
- ❖ swept the sidewalks of 2 neighbors
- ❖ encourage and help co-workers with: lunch, finances, assignments
- ❖ encouraged and prayed for 2 women having relationship problems
- ❖ Invited a co-worker to Prayer Meeting
- ❖ Typed a letter for a co-worker
- ❖ Ministered in song at the Nursing Home and prayed for residents.
- ❖ Accompanied an elderly person on her morning walk
- ❖ Invited someone for dinner with my family
- ❖ Gave a friend at school a “Daily Bread”
- ❖ While visiting a patient in the Hospital, was asked to go to patient’s home to pick up clothing and did
- ❖ Prayer for and encouraged a young girl who was a victim of a sexual assault
- ❖ Invited co-workers to Mother’s Day service at the church
- ❖ Dropped someone home
- ❖ Bought building materials for a neighbor
- ❖ Gave clothing to a friend
- ❖ Shared groceries with a neighbor
- ❖ Ran one block to catch up with a neighbor who had dropped some of her groceries without realizing it.
- ❖ Gave Father’s Day cards to 3 neighbors
- ❖ Gave finances to help people in need
- ❖ Gave counseling to someone
- ❖ Gave words of encouragement
- ❖ Gave gifts to those in need
- ❖ Prayed for a woman whose doctor said she is unable to give birth
- ❖ Visited and prayed for a family and brought gifts for the children
- ❖ Helped to get a patient’s sister in to visit him
- ❖ Visited a neighbor in the Hospital and at home
- ❖ Donated clothing and money to a community Center

- ❖ Encouraged my neighbor whose mother was in the Hospital
- ❖ Cooked for my co-workers
- ❖ Helped co-workers with their daily assignments
- ❖ Made dinner for someone in need
- ❖ Gave a mother my umbrella so she could shelter herself and her baby from the rain
- ❖ Helped an elder neighbor carry her groceries up the steps
- ❖ Invited someone to church
- ❖ Gave co-worker a card congratulating her on the completion of her graduate work
- ❖ Brought fruit for a co-worker
- ❖ Gave a co-worker's child a toy
- ❖ Covered the Auditorium of my school for my boss
- ❖ Helped Principal of my school with Special Education issues to promote learning rate
- ❖ Took a misbehaving student from another teacher and kept him for the day
- ❖ Waited for a co-worker who did not know directions so she could follow behind my vehicle
- ❖ Walked up 4 flights to get report cards for a pregnant staff member
- ❖ Gave 2 co-workers mangoes and coconut cake
- ❖ Helped an elderly person cross the street
- ❖ Gave information about the Hope Center to a single mother in need
- ❖ Gave the address and phone number of the church to a young man who needed food and help on a regular basis
- ❖ Distributed water on hot days
- ❖ Made follow-up phone calls to individuals seen at the Prayer Station to enquire after and encourage them
- ❖ Took a gentleman out to dinner who has no family member to help him at this time
- ❖ Purchased and gave clothing to 7 needy children
- ❖ Gave clothing to the needy at the Nursing Home

- ❖ Purchased shoes for someone in need
- ❖ Invited a friend from Trinidad for dinner and took her shopping
- ❖ Visited a sick friend at the Hospital
- ❖ Bought food for someone in need
- ❖ Morning walks with two of my neighbors
- ❖ Taking the time to greet my neighbors and enquiring after their well-being
- ❖ Hospital visitation; praying with and helping the person in the bed next to the person being visited.
- ❖ Calling and encouraging individuals that were prayed for.

Acts of Sharing: Number: **176**

Specific ways of sharing:

- ❖ shared the Gospel
- ❖ shared personal testimony
- ❖ invitation to church service
- ❖ spoke and shared one Sunday's message about Jonah and disobedience
- ❖ shared Psalms and prayed with a mother whose daughter has MS, which is getting worse, son is in hospital and whose husband lost his business
- ❖ encouraged an elderly person that even though she lives alone, she is never alone because God is always near, if she will only put her trust in Him. Explained to her the plan of Salvation
- ❖ Read the Bible for, encouraged and prayed for residents of Schulman Nursing Home
- ❖ Shared Phil. 4:13
- ❖ In house prayer
- ❖ Encouraged people to hope in God
- ❖ Prayed for a pregnant woman whose baby the doctor said is not set where it should be
- ❖ Handed out tracts to some elderly people and reminded them about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ
- ❖ Shared the Gospel with some young people sitting by the street
- ❖ Distributed tracts and Daily Words

- ❖ Witnessing
- ❖ Shared the Word of God with a Mother I met on the street
- ❖ Shared the word with my landlord and invited her to church
- ❖ Allowed my co-worker to watch my baptism video
- ❖ Encouraged my co-worker to look at blessings instead of always focusing on setbacks
- ❖ Handed out copies of a poem about why I became a Christian
- ❖ Did not dance at the end of year party and shared with two colleagues how to avoid sexually explicit music
- ❖ Introduced someone to Christ
- ❖ Led someone in the sinner's prayer
- ❖ Shared my testimony with someone who has stopped coming to church
- ❖ Sharing the Gospel with individuals prayed for
- ❖ A young man on my block always wants to engage me in conversation, so I used that opportunity to share the Gospel.

Number of Cards Distributed: Business Cards: **118** Contact Cards: **90** Total: **208**

Number of Prayer Walks Completed: 163

Number of Prayer Requests Received: 311

Number of Souls Accepting Christ: 22

Number of People Attending a Church Service (COGEF): 39

(Other): **1**

Number of Answered Prayers:

Body: **15**

Labor: **4**

Emotional: **11**

Social: **4**

Spiritual: **6**

Testimonials:

Sis. Stone:

- ❖ Improvement in health of someone she prayed for.

- ❖ Prayed for a woman in Tennessee who called to say that she was having a problem with her pregnancy and her doctor said she had to have a c-section. While we were on the phone praying the doctor came in the room. When she hung up the phone she told him she was not going to have the c-section, she was going to have the baby naturally. She called me 15 minutes after that to tell me she had just had the baby and that everything was O.K.

- ❖ Prayed for and anointed a person who was crippled and she got healed and returned to her job.

Sis. Beverly Adams:

- ❖ A young man she had been praying for and witnessing to, who was a very vocal atheist, requested prayer when he got in trouble, acknowledging that only God can help him in his situation. Even his family members are amazed that he should do this.
- ❖ Prayed for relationship between mother and daughter and there was a change

Prayer Station:

- ❖ We prayed for someone and when they went to their doctor's appointment the Doctor could no longer find the problem.
- ❖ We prayed for someone who was having conflict in the home. There was a change, restoration of a confused mind and now the person feels at peace.
- ❖ A husband came to the Prayer Station for prayer after we prayed for his wife last week.
- ❖ A young lady received a job after we prayed for her.
- ❖ Back pain was healed.
- ❖ Someone reported feeling peaceful after being prayed for.
- ❖ A young lady accepted Christ and is now attending church.
- ❖ A young man, after being prayed for came the following Sunday and accepted Christ and is now attending church.

Sis. Crosdale:

- ❖ Prayed for a patient who was scheduled for surgery. She was very scared and did not think she would make it. The surgery was successful and patient went home.
- ❖ Prayed for my co-workers who were sick in the Hospital, they received healing and are at home.
- ❖ Prayed for my co-worker who was very stressed and could not cope. She is doing much better and able to handle situations better.

Sis. Telesha Braithwaite:

- ❖ Prayed for a co-worker's son who had a rash all over his body and the child was completely healed.
- ❖ A teacher requested a school trip for a Special Education class that is rarely allowed to go on trips. The Lord opened a way and on short notice, in less than a week, a bus was ordered and they were included. (The process to get a school trip authorized can take several weeks).
- ❖ Staff member was completely healed from pneumonia.

Sis. Pam:

- ❖ Prayed for a client re: the first part of his EMT exam and he passed. He also reported back that he passed the rest of his exams.

Bro. Antonio Graham:

- ❖ Patient who had 2 mild strokes which prevented her from walking without assistance. I encouraged her through the Word of God and today she is walking with some measure of aid.

Sis. Joanna Edwards:

- ❖ Prayed for a lady who was not feeling well and she went to the doctor. The doctor said she was O.K. for the pain in her back and her body.

Sis. Lindow:

- ❖ I prayed for a young lady that God would heal her and save her and he did so, thanks be to God. I also prayed for a friend with family problems and God has been working it out.
- ❖ I prayed that God would change a young man and he has started coming to church and there is a change in his life.

Comments:

Sis. Stone:

- ❖ I give honor to God for allowing me to meet people and share the Word of God with them.

Bro. Henry:

- ❖ The Lighthouse project helped me to reach out beyond my boundaries to pray for people in other countries of the world. I pray now with a passion to see God's people established in many parts of the world as servants for God.

Sis. Crosdale:

- ❖ People are willing to give their hearts to the Lord but there are some strong holds that are holding them back from doing so, but we will continue to pray for them. Some have given their hearts to the Lord but are afraid of the commitment. We are not going to give up in praying because we know that God can break every stronghold.

Bro. Gardner:

- ❖ The participants of the Men's Ministry's Father's Day barbeque enjoyed the fellowship and the love the brother's showed. One man mentioned that he was going to make COGEF his church home.

Sis. Beverly Adams:

- ❖ After praying for the people on my block, after living there a year I now begin to know who my neighbors are. I now have a speaking relationship with five of them. Before, I did not even see them, but now I am able to stop and greet them, which made it easier to deliver the prayer cards to them.

APPENDIX AAA

MINISTERIAL COMPETENCIES

Ministerial Competency Assessment

SITE TEAM MEMBERS: Olivia Ansong, Peter Amoo Ashie, Godson Amevor, Shavonnne Dormant, Andy Mac-Carthy, Marjorie Laryea

SUBJECT	Question A	Question B	Question C	Question D	Question E	Question F	Question G	Question H	Question I	Question J	Question K
Theologian 2			Develop 1	Atten.1			Develop 1	Develop 1	Develop 1		
Preacher 6			Atten.1T=2 Develop 1			Atten.1	Develop 2	Develop 1	Develop 1 Atten.1T=2		
Worship Leader 3			Atten.1								
Prophetic Agent 3	Develop 1		Develop 1	Develop 1	Develop 1	Develop 2	Develop 2				
leader 6	Develop 2				Develop 1 Atten.1T=2	Develop 1	Develop 2 Start1 T=3		Develop 1	Develop 1	Atten.1 Develop 2 Start1 T=4
Religious Educator 4	Develop 1 Atten.1T=2	Atten.1	Atten.1	Develop 1	Develop 2	Develop 2	Develop 1		Develop 1 Atten.1T=2	Develop 2	
Counselor 4									Develop 1		
Pastor 6					Start 1	Develop 1 Start1 T=2					
Spiritual Leader 3											
Ecumenist 2		Develop 1	Develop 1								
Witness or Evangelist 4		Develop 1	Develop 1	Atten.1							
Administrator 2		Develop 1	Develop 1	Develop 1	Develop 1						
Professional 4		Atten.1						Start 1			

CONTINUE: Highly satisfactory in performance **DEVELOP:** To be honed and develop further **ATTENTION:** Special attention needed **START:** Develop a talent

APPENDIX B

EVANGELICAL REPORT FORM

LIGHTHOUSE OF PRAYER REPORT SHEET

Name: _____ Date: _____

Phone: _____

Lighthouse Location: (Please check one.)

Home: _____ Work: _____ School: _____ Other (specify): _____

Zip Code of Lighthouse Location: _____

Number of people prayed for: _____

Acts of Caring: Number: _____

Specify act(s) of caring done: _____

Acts of Sharing: Number: _____

Specify way(s) you shared: _____

Number of Cards Distributed: Business Cards: _____ Contact Cards: _____

Number of Prayer Walks Completed: _____

Number of Prayer Requests Received: _____

Number of Souls Accepting Christ: _____

Number of People Attending a Church Service: _____

Number of Answered Prayers:

Body: _____

Labor: _____

Emotional: _____

Social: _____

Spiritual: _____

Testimonials:

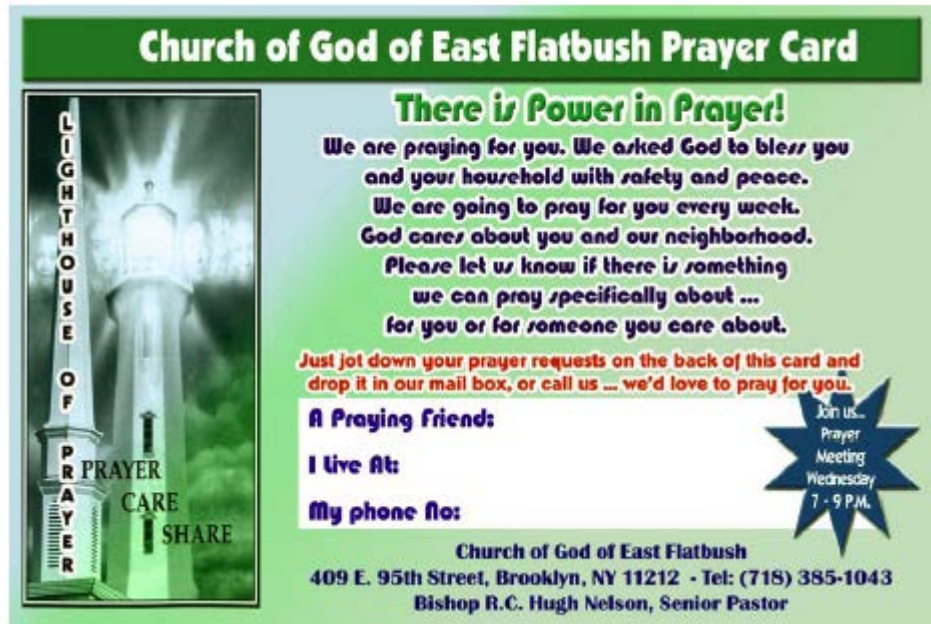
Please submit forms to Pamela Kirlew (718) 444-3419, email: pwelrik@optonline.net or
Rev. E. Nyarko

APPENDIX C

PUBLICATION ON LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT

APPENDIX D

LIGHTHOUSE PRAYER CARDS & DISTRIBUTIONS



FRONT of CARD



REAR of CARD

Church of God of East Flatbush Prayer Card



There is Power in Prayer!
Prayer can make a difference in the life of every person in our city and community.
We'd like to pray specifically for your needs.
Please let us know if there is something we can pray about ...
for you or for someone you care about.
You can submit your prayer requests in person, by phone, by email or via our website.
Be our Guest. Attend our Special Prayer Service*
Visit us on the Web: www.cogofeastflatbush.org
Call: (718) 385-1043 - or email: eastflatbushc@aol.com
*See back for details

Church of God of East Flatbush
409 E. 95th Street, Brooklyn, NY 11212 - Tel: (718) 385-1043
Bishop R.C. Hugh Nelson, Senior Pastor

FRONT of CARD



Ministries
"Making Disciples To Impact Our World"

Sunday
Divine Worship
8:00 a.m. & 11:00 a.m.
Sunday School
10:00 a.m.
Worship Service
6:30 p.m.

Wednesday
Fasting & Prayer
11:00 A.M.
Prayer & Bible Studies
7:00 p.m. - 9:00 p.m.

Saturday
Community Outreach
Soup Kitchen & Food Pantry
11:00 a.m. - 1:00 p.m.

Urban Impact Radio
Thursday 5:30 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.
WWDJ AM970

We are a Lighthouse of Prayer.
"Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven."
Matthew 18:19

REAR of CARD

LIGHTHOUSE FOCUS GROUP

PRAYER (BUSINESS) CARD

APPENDIX E

PROJECT CELEBRATION PROGRAM

Lighthouse of Prayer Evangelism Project Focus Group

Focus Group Leader:
Rev. Ed. Nyarko

Group Members:

Adams, Beverly	Green, Lola
Bowman, Ione	Grubb, Carmen
Braithwaite, Telesha T.	Gyapong, Selene
Brown, Matthew	Haughton, Barbara
Crosdale, Vanessa	Henry, Leslie
DeLisser, George	Holness, Daphne
Douglas-Pryce, Rev. J	Johnson, Alecia
Edwards, Joanna	Johnson, Jeniva
Edwards, Veronica	Jones, Elaine
Fagan, Jean	Kirlew, Arnold
Forbes, Pauline	Kirlew, Pamela
Foster, Edward	Lindow, Alice
Foster, Julian	Neil, Clara
Francis, Candice	Pearl, James
Francis, Leford	Pinnock, Sharon
Gardner, Stainton	Robinson, Penziner
Gedeon, Catherine	Stone, Muriel
Gedeon, Gillian	Thomas, Ione
Graham, Antonio	Williams, Frances





Prayer = Care = Share

Church of God of East Flatbush

**Lighthouse of Prayer
Evangelism Project
Celebration**

**Sunday, September 16, 2007
6:30 p.m.**

**Guest Speaker
Dr. Charlene Floyd**



What is A lighthouse of Prayer?

A lighthouse of Prayer is not a program. It's simply a process of praying daily for people around you who have not yet begun a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. Lighthouses follow the pattern of Luke 10:5-9, where Jesus gives instruction on sharing the good news.

It's important to remember that the timing of each of these phases can range from a relatively short period of time to several years. Each relationship will be unique and will develop differently. The most important thing is to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit

Phase 1: Establish a "Perimeter of Faith" and "Speak Peace" (Luke 10:5)

A perimeter of faith is a territory you'll commit to praying over daily. It could be either your neighborhood or your workplace. Start by asking God to help you determine the number of people, homes, cubicles or apartments that he wants you to influence personally. Then ask God for the faith to do it. Your perimeter of faith should be big enough to stretch you, but small enough to allow you to track the progress of your relationships. Your perimeter should also consist of people with whom you have, or can potentially have, contact. It is not necessary at the outset to know everyone in your perimeter - but through dedicated prayer God may begin a relationship that doesn't currently exist.

Once you establish your perimeter of faith, the next step is to "speak peace." - to start praying for blessing. The goal is simply to establish a lifestyle of praying for those around you, and to ask God to bless them and to be working in their lives.

Phase 2: Bridge Building (Luke 10:7)

The second phase involves establishing relationships with the people for whom you're praying.

Phase 3: Pray for felt needs (Luke 10:9)

Now that you've been praying and developing relationships, look for specific needs that are expressed in the context of your relationships and pray for those things.

Phase 4: Proclamation (Luke 10:9)

As the people in your perimeter of faith become aware of the presence, the love, and the power of God, be ready for opportunities to share the good news of Jesus Christ.

CELEBRATION OF LIGHTHOUSE EVANGELISM PROJECT (FEBRUARY - JULY, 2007)

Sunday, September 16, 2007

6:30 PM

PRAISE & WORSHIP
Praise Team

PRAYER
Sis. Joanna Edwards

SCRIPTURE
Bro. Leford Francis
1 Timothy 2:1-4

VIDEO ON LIGHTHOUSE EVANGELISM

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT
Bro. Arnold Kirlaw

LIGHTHOUSE PROJECT INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES & TESTIMONIES

INTRODUCTION OF SPEAKER
Rev. Ed Nyarko

SOLO
Sis. Pamela Kirlaw

PRESENTATION
Dr. Charlene Floyd

CLOSING REMARKS & PRAYER
Bishop R. C. Hugh Nelson

APPENDIX F

PROJECT REPORT BY MY SITE TEAM

Lighthouses of Prayer Project Summary

Submitted by: Arnold & Pamela Kirlew,
Site Team Supervisors *January 16, 2008*

When asked why they did not evangelize more often, many of our members said, “I’m too scared!” or “I don’t know what to say.” The more traditional methods of evangelism required that they be more aggressive in their approach to sharing their faith with unbelievers. With friends and family this may have been a little easier to do; however, even the thought of approaching total strangers to simply hand them a tract raised their stress levels so high that many were less apt to share their faith. This in turn led to feelings of guilt. As people were introduced to the Lighthouse method of evangelism, it was as if a load was lifted off their shoulders.

The Lighthouse method is such a simple, stress free approach to evangelism that it took some members more time to make the paradigm shift. In fact, we had to convince some that praying for and caring for souls was still evangelism. Many were already praying for unsaved relatives and friends as well as caring for them. What the Lighthouse method did was to give them structure and allowed them to take what they were already doing to another level. Praying the “Five Blessings” allowed individuals to be more focused in their prayers and more deliberate in seeking for opportunities to care.

Everyone felt comfortable praying and caring and by the time it came to the sharing, it felt like a natural progression. Some members utilized CD’s and tapes to initiate discussions about God and salvation. Others reported that they did not have to initiate the discussions because as they developed relationships, those for whom they were praying asked questions that led to opportunities to share the Gospel. Additionally, understanding that one may not see results right away, or in some cases never, because someone else may reap the harvest that they planted, took the pressure off of those who were very result oriented.

The training sessions were very crucial, at all stages, for the focus group. During the training sessions the participants were able to ask questions and get clarification on all aspects of the Lighthouse method. They were also able to share challenges and successes as well as prayer requests. Even when the project ended, the request was

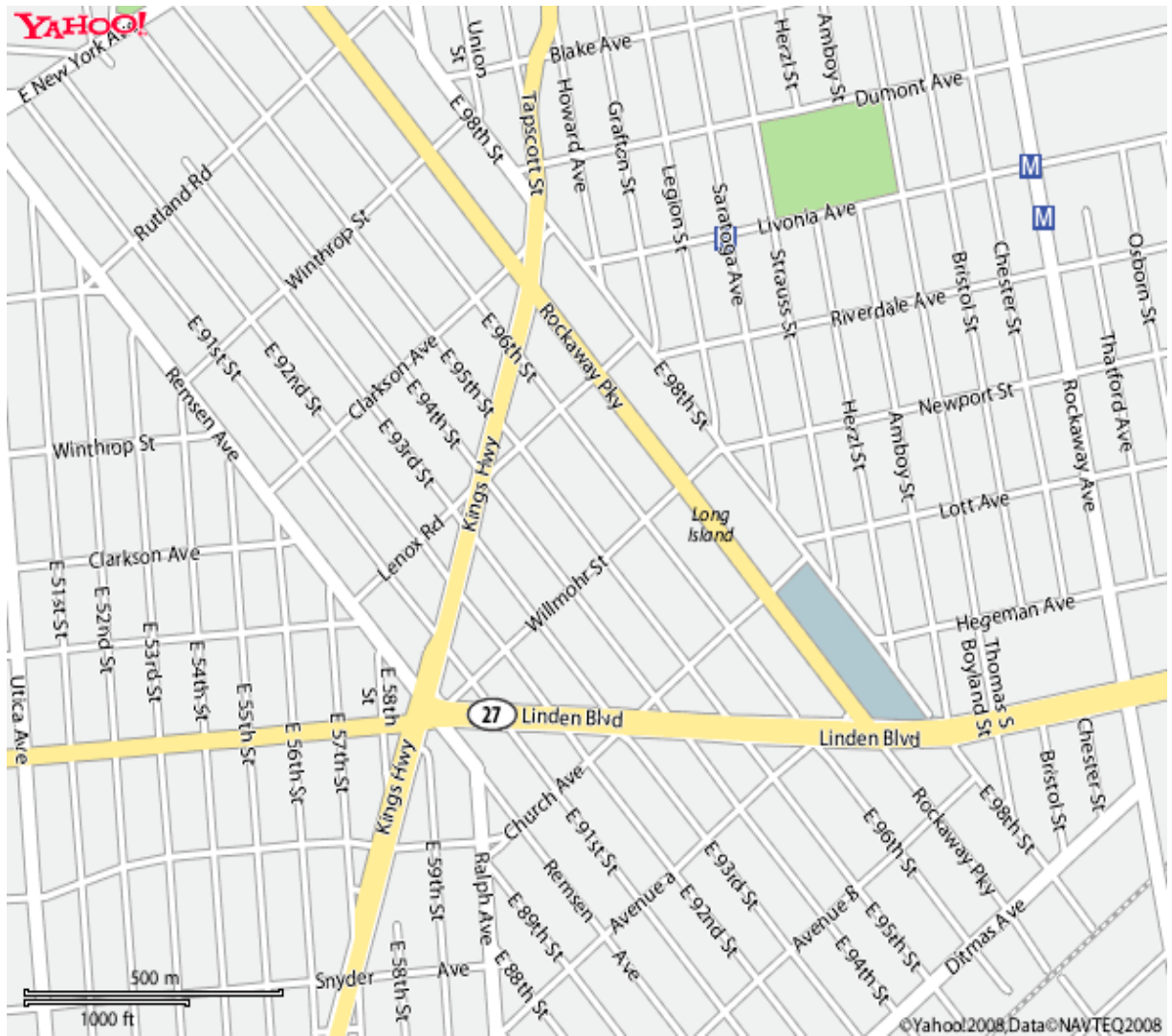
made to continue the meetings as a special bond had been formed among members of the team.

As individuals went through the Lighthouse training, it was great to see the excitement and joy they felt because they were finally fulfilling the Great Commission. Not only were they more at peace, but they were also experiencing tangible changes in their own life situations. As their faith grew in response to God answering prayers on behalf of others, they were more able to step out in faith for themselves. The project not only empowered many to share their faith, but also emboldened some who were afraid to speak publicly to share their experiences at our celebration service.

As a result of the positive effect that the Lighthouse project has had on the members, our church has adopted the Lighthouse Method as the main strategy for soul winning. Our Senior Pastor has made Evangelism one of the three overall ministry goals for the 2007-2009 leadership teams and when each department shared their specific goals at our leadership meeting, Lighthouse Evangelism training was very prominent. In addition to the training done in corporate worship services, various departments have scheduled training for their specific ministries. The Life Builders (Men's) Ministry has already trained about 20 men and has extended this with a three-month course on Intercessory Prayer during our Christian Education hour. Their plan is to train 100 men in Lighthouse Evangelism by 2009. Many of those who have gone through the training have reported that they are now able to pray more and are also no longer afraid to pray aloud in a church service.

Appendix G

Map of
Church of God of East Flatbush
409 E 95th St Brooklyn, NY 11212-2636
(See Bold Marks for COGOEF and Prayer Walk Areas)



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